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By [Common Dreams](#)

'Right Person to Lead the Charge Against the Existential Threats of Our Time': Nearly 500 Groups Call for Haaland's Confirmation

"Rep. Haaland's confirmation would be both an historic and much-needed step toward reckoning with a long and troubling legacy while building new, lasting, equitable achievements."

By [Andrea Germanos](#), staff writer



Rep. Deb Haaland (D-N.M.) speaks at a press conference at the Longworth Office Building on September 10, 2020 in Washington, D.C. (Photo: Jemal Countess/Getty Images for Green New Deal Network)

Nearly 500 organizations on Tuesday urged Senate leadership to support the swift confirmation of President Joe Biden's [pick](#) to lead the Interior Department—Rep. Deb Haaland—calling her the "right person to lead the charge

against the existential threats of our time—tackling the climate, biodiversity, extinction, and Covid-19 crises, and racial justice inequities on our federal public lands and waters."

The call came in a [letter](#) (pdf) signed by a diverse collection of local, state, and national groups including 350 Seattle, the American Federation of Teachers, and Western Environmental Law Center. It was sent to Senate to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as Energy and Natural Resources Committee chair Joe Manchin and its ranking member, Republican John Barrasso.

That committee announced Tuesday that her confirmation hearing would be held next week on February 23.

If confirmed, Haaland—a Green New Deal-backer and member of the Laguna Pueblo in New Mexico—would be the first-ever Native American cabinet member and would oversee some 500 million acres of federal land.

The letter points to the Trump administration's attacks on federal lands and failure to consult with tribes, writing that "Rep. Haaland's confirmation would be both an historic and much-needed step toward reckoning with a long and troubling legacy while building new, lasting, equitable achievements."

"Respecting tribal sovereignty and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of tribes by engaging in meaningful consultation on a direct nation-to-nation basis is imperative, and we are confident that Secretary-designee Haaland's experience makes her the perfect candidate to lead this change," the groups wrote.

Also addressed are the former administration's "reckless leasing and drilling agenda has left our lands, waters, coasts, wildlife, communities, and climate at risk." The letter asserts the Covid-19 pandemic has "magnified the interdependence of healthy ecosystems and human life, and the disproportionate burdens faced by Indigenous, Black and communities of color."

And Haaland, the letter says, is well positioned "to hit the ground running on these critical issues." The group forsee her as being "able to utilize agency resources to deploy sustainable renewable energy jobs and ensure frontline communities are central to an economic transition."

The letter also frames the coronavirus pandemic as "a wake-up call: the time to address the long-standing gaps in outdoor access and quality has come," and

touts Haaland being "dedicated to restoring equity and justice to all people on our public lands."

What's more, Haaland "will be a passionate advocate for climate and biodiversity action stewarding public lands and conserving them for future generations," the groups said.

According to Anna Peterson, executive director of The Mountain Pact, Haaland's leadership is sorely needed given the past four years, during which "our public lands were sold off to the Trump administration's friends and former clients while draining the agencies of their experienced staff."

"As an Indigenous woman and a Westerner with extensive experience protecting and managing America's most majestic landmarks, she is the ideal choice for the Secretary of Interior," said Peterson. "We urge the Senate to confirm her as quickly as possible."

The new letter was released a day after a tweet by Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), in which he attempted to disparage Haaland by saying she "has joined pipeline protests and opposed fracking," [turn into](#) a progressive argument for her confirmation.

Among those who seized upon Cornyn's tweet was Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who referred to Haaland's climate activism as "great news."

"We need an Interior Secretary who has the guts to take on fossil fuel CEOs whose greed is destroying the planet," Sanders tweeted. "We need an Interior Secretary who will protect our environment. I'm confident Deb Haaland is that person and I am proud to support her nomination."