



Arizona State Senate *Office of the President*

February 7, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Reversing the Obama/Biden Land Grab in Arizona to Unleash American Energy

Dear Secretary Burgum:

Congratulations on your confirmation as the 55th Secretary of the Department of the Interior. As you begin this important role, I write you in my capacity as President of the Arizona State Senate to respectfully request a meeting to discuss reversal of a land grab of more than 900,000 acres in Arizona. Reversing decisions by President Obama and President Biden will advance President Trump's commitment to make America energy dominant again.

President Trump is unleashing American energy to protect national security, create jobs, and lower costs for Americans.¹ On his first day in office, President Trump directed you and the rest of his cabinet to immediately identify and rescind all agency actions that impose an undue burden on the development of domestic energy resources like critical minerals and nuclear energy resources.² President Trump further directed you and other

¹ See Executive Order 14154, *Unleashing American Energy*, 90 Fed. Reg. 8353 (Jan. 20, 2025), § 1.

² *Id.* at § 3(a).

relevant agencies to restore America’s mineral dominance, including through identifying and rescinding agency actions that impose undue burdens on domestic mining.³

In Arizona, President Biden’s proclamation of the “Ancestral Footprints” national monument is an action that should be rescinded.⁴ With the stroke of a pen, President Biden condemned to dormancy more than 900,000 acres of rich Arizona ground. Government scientists believe that more than 300 million pounds of uranium is buried here,⁵ including “some of the highest-grade uranium ore in this country”⁶ The energy that could be produced by this uranium is equivalent to the 13 billion barrels of oil located in North America’s largest oil field.⁷ Yet beginning with bureaucratic action by President Obama in 2009,⁸ the federal government has prohibited mining this uranium. President Biden’s unilateral action makes this prohibition permanent. I have fought President Biden’s land grab since it occurred.

The Obama/Biden land grab hurts America’s national security. Virtually all of the uranium used in America comes from foreign powers. In 2023, America imported 99% of the uranium used by U.S. nuclear generators—32 million pounds.⁹ The Department of Commerce has concluded that “U.S. nuclear electric power generators would not be able to operate at full capacity and would not be able to support critical infrastructure electric power needs if foreign nations, particularly Russia and other former Soviet states, chose to suspend or otherwise end uranium exports to the United States.”¹⁰ Even though America is thankfully phasing out Russian uranium imports,¹¹ Russia has “the military means to deny U.S. and U.S.-aligned countries access to Kazakh and Uzbek uranium exported through Russian ports, principally on the Baltic Sea,” which could cause “critical fuel shortages” in the United States.¹²

³ *Id.* at § 9(a).

⁴ *Establishment of the Baaj Nwaavjo I’tah Kukveni—Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument, Proclamation 10606 of Aug. 8, 2023*, 88 Fed. Reg. 55331 (Aug. 15, 2023) (“Biden Proclamation”).

⁵ *Hydrological, Geological, and Biological Site characterization of Breccia Pipe Uranium Deposits in Northern Arizona: Scientific Investigations Report 2010-5025*, U.S. Geological Serv. (2010), 36, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2010/5025/pdf/sir2010-5025.pdf>.

⁶ *Id.* at 5.

⁷ Arizona SCM 1007 (2011), 1, <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/50leg/1r/bills/scm1007p.pdf>.

⁸ 74 Fed. Reg. 35887 (July 21, 2009); 76 Fed. Reg. 37826 (June 28, 2011); 77 Fed. Reg. 2317 (Jan. 17, 2012); 77 Fed. Reg. 2563 (Jan. 18, 2012).

⁹ *U.S. nuclear generators import nearly all the uranium concentrate they use*, U.S. Energy Information Administration (Jan. 30, 2025), <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=64444>.

¹⁰ *Publication of a Report on the Effect of Imports of Uranium on the National Security: An Investigation Conducted Under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, as Amended*, 86 Fed. Reg. 41540, 41542 (Aug. 2, 2021) (“Commerce Uranium Report”).

¹¹ *Prohibiting Imports of Uranium Products from the Russian Federation*, U.S. Dept. of State (May 14, 2024), <https://2021-2025.state.gov/prohibiting-imports-of-uranium-products-from-the-russian-federation>.

¹² Commerce Uranium Report, 86 Fed. Reg. at 41598.

Importing virtually all of our uranium forces America to be dependent on foreign powers. Reversing the Obama/Biden land grab would protect America's national security by producing uranium here.

The Obama/Biden land grab also hurts America's economy. Mining creates jobs and revenue for Arizonans. For example, one study estimated that uranium mining would create more than 1,000 new jobs and provide a \$29 billion benefit to local economies in Northern Arizona and Southern Utah over four decades.¹³ This economic activity also would generate taxes and fees to build roads and hire law enforcement and first responders. In addition, because the nation's second-largest nuclear power plant is located in Arizona and produces 27% of Arizona's electricity,¹⁴ mining uranium in Arizona could reduce Arizonans' electric bills.

Prohibiting productive use of land in Arizona affects jobs, families, and local economies. Reversing the Obama/Biden land grab would promote beneficial economic activity.

Finally, the Obama/Biden land grab needlessly asserts federal dominance over Arizona. More than 40% of Arizona—30 million acres—is owned by the United States.¹⁵ The Obama/Biden land grab banned the productive use of an area roughly the size of Rhode Island.¹⁶ The Obama/Biden land grab did nothing to protect the Grand Canyon, which has been enshrined by law as a national park for more than 100 years.¹⁷ And President Biden's justification for his action included protecting animals like the northern grasshopper mouse (which transports plague-carrying fleas)¹⁸ and ordinary plants like native grasses and shrubs.¹⁹ Arizona and America deserve better.

President Trump's vision to unleash American energy can be supported by reversing the Obama/Biden land grab in Arizona. Productively and responsibly using Arizona's resources will protect America's national security, create jobs, lower costs, grow

¹³ Madan M. Singh, *Joint Oversight Field Hearing entitled "On the Edge: Challenges Facing Grand Canyon National Park*, U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands and Subcommittee on Water and Power (Apr. 8, 2010), 9, <https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/singhtestimony04.08.10.pdf>.

¹⁴ *Arizona: State Profile and Energy Estimates*, U.S. Energy Information Administration (June 20, 2024), <https://www.eia.gov/state/analysis.php?sid=AZ>.

¹⁵ *Public Land Management and Land Ownership in Arizona*, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/boise/AWAE/labs/awae_flagstaff/watersheds/basics/management.html.

¹⁶ *State Area Measurements and Internal Point Coordinates*, U.S. Census (Dec. 16, 2021), <https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-files/2010/geo/state-area.html>.

¹⁷ 16 U.S.C. § 221.

¹⁸ Biden Proclamation, 88 Fed. Reg. at 55336; *see also* R. E. Thomas *et al.*, *Susceptibility to Yersinia Pestis in the Northern Grasshopper Mouse*, 24 J. OF WILDLIFE DISEASES 327 (1988).

¹⁹ Biden Proclamation, 88 Fed. Reg. at 55336.

the economy, and remove unnecessary federal control over Arizona. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we can work together to reverse this Arizona land grab and unleash American energy.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Petersen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Warren Petersen
President of the Arizona State Senate

cc: The Honorable Pam Bondi, Attorney General of the United States