

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Debra A. Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Biden and Secretary Haaland:

We write to request that you issue a proclamation under the *Antiquities Act of 1906* to designate the Chuckwalla National Monument in eastern Imperial and Riverside counties in California.

We have introduced the “Chuckwalla National Monument Establishment and Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act of 2024” to conserve iconic and sensitive California landscapes, foster Tribal collaborative management of sacred public lands, and increase recreation and equitable access to the outdoors. Our bill would establish a new Chuckwalla National Monument to protect approximately 627,855 acres of public lands while also expanding Joshua Tree National Park by adding approximately 17,915 acres of previously designated public lands. We request that you use your authority under the *Antiquities Act* to protect these iconic landscapes included in the map titled “Proposed Chuckwalla National Monument and Joshua Tree National Park Expansion” and dated April 12, 2024. We also request that you visit the proposed designations and would be happy to host you for the visit this spring.

Our efforts enjoy broad support from federal, tribal, state, and local officials, and was crafted in close coordination with affected communities and key stakeholders after years of grassroots advocacy to bring greater protections and recreation opportunities in the California Desert. Our legislation also carefully balances the land use needs of the energy industry so that as we protect our most sensitive landscapes, we also ensure that California and the nation are able to meet our clean energy goals. Our bill has earned support from numerous elected officials, businesses, conservation and outdoor recreation organizations, and key partners in the energy industry. We are proud of the support we have built to date and are confident that any *Antiquities Act* designation would enjoy equally broad support.

The proposed Chuckwalla National Monument’s vast desert landscape spanning the area along Joshua Tree National Park’s southern boundary, along Interstate 10 from the eastern Coachella Valley, and all the way to the Colorado River are worthy of permanent protection. This area has a unique, biodiverse ecosystem, is home to habitats for species like the Chuckwalla lizard and the endangered desert tortoise, and contains critical migration corridors for desert bighorn sheep. This area is also cherished for

outdoor recreation activities like hiking and rock climbing. Preserving this vast desert landscape will help ensure more equitable access to nature and recreation, protect biodiversity, and preserve decades of cultural riches, particularly for the local tribal communities.

The lands we are proposing for protection include the homelands of the Iviatim, Nüwü, Pipa Aha Macav, Kwatsáan, and Maara'yam peoples (Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave, Quechan, and Serrano nations). Designating the Chuckwalla National Monument would help to protect important spiritual and cultural values tied to the land such as multi-use trail systems established by Indigenous peoples, sacred sites and objects, traditional cultural places, geoglyphs, petroglyphs, pictographs, and native plants and wildlife. Our legislation would also further our shared goals to honor Tribal sovereignty and advance cooperative management of federal public lands by allowing Tribes to voluntarily engage in cooperative management of the public lands within the National Monument. We hope that any presidential proclamation under the *Antiquities Act* would include similar direction for the Bureau of Land Management to provide ample opportunity for federally recognized tribes to co-steward the Monument. Finally, our legislation directs Interior to conduct an ethnographic study and cultural resources survey for the land within and adjacent to the proposed Monument to assess the importance of these lands to affected Indian Tribes.

Establishing the Chuckwalla National Monument would contribute to the Administration's goal under Executive Order 14008 of permanently conserving 30 percent of the United States lands and coastal waters by 2030, as well as the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative, which is intended to address the three interlocking crises of nature loss, climate change, and inequitable access to the outdoors.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to permanently conserve this unique desert landscape in California for future generations to enjoy, and we would be pleased to host you for an in-person visit in the near future.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Laphonza Butler
United States Senator



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



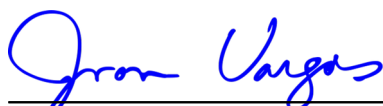
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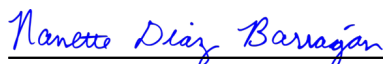
Katie Porter
Member of Congress



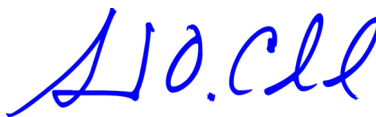
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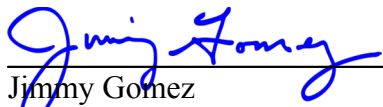
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