

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2026

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

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Burgum and Secretary Wright:

We write to request your support and assistance with the transfer of withdrawn public lands at the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Site to the Department of Energy (DOE). This transfer is essential to enable DOE to fully execute its expanding and urgent mission at INL and to eliminate administrative complications that could hinder critical national security and energy research activities.

As you may know, the INL Site encompasses 569,152 acres in southeastern Idaho. Over 90% of this acreage consists of public lands that were withdrawn from public land laws in the 1950s primarily through Public Land Orders (PLOs) 637, 691, and 1770, and reserved for use by the Atomic Energy Commission. These lands remain under some Department of the Interior (DOI) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administrative oversight despite DOE's operational responsibility for the Site.

Although INL's origins trace to the National Reactor Testing Station established in 1949, the Laboratory's mission has expanded significantly to include critical infrastructure security, advanced energy technology development and demonstration, and other vital national priorities. The existing PLOs restrict DOE's use of withdrawn lands to purposes outlined in 1950s-era designations, limiting the Laboratory's ability to expand facilities for current mission areas. Additionally, shared management authority complicates infrastructure development, including transmission lines and power rights-of-way essential to energy technology research and demonstration projects.

We are concerned this situation could impact new mission-critical activities, including the siting of AI infrastructure and associated power generation, on withdrawn lands when land use authority remains unclear or requires extensive coordination with BLM. This uncertainty deters early characterization and planning efforts for facilities that are essential to national energy security and advanced research programs.

We respectfully request that your departments work together to support efforts transferring full management authority and control of the withdrawn lands within the INL boundary from DOI/BLM to DOE. This transfer would enable DOE to utilize these lands for the full

scope of INL's mission without the constraints of outdated land order language, while eliminating complications from dual-agency management.

We emphasize that such a transfer should not impact existing grazing lease holders on the property or county Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funds. We are committed to honoring current grazing arrangements and working constructively with the surrounding counties and stakeholders who utilize these lands. Additionally, government to government tribal engagement must occur to ensure alignment and the continuation of vital partnerships in proximity to INL.

To facilitate this important initiative, within the next 30 days, we respectfully request each of you designate a point person within your respective departments to work directly with the Idaho Congressional Delegation on the necessary steps to accomplish this transfer. We stand ready to provide any assistance that may be required.

The transfer of these lands to DOE control represents a critical step in ensuring INL can continue to serve as the premier national laboratory for nuclear energy research, critical infrastructure protection, and advanced energy technology development. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to achieve this important objective.

Sincerely,



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Mike Simpson
Member of Congress