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Preserving America's Heritage

June 10, 2019

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, 303
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

On behalf of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), I am writing to commend you on your leadership and efforts to preserve and protect Chaco Culture National Historical Park and sensitive areas adjacent to it. The ACHP was pleased to learn of Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt's recent announcement to impose a one-year moratorium on oil and gas leasing in the vicinity of Chaco, a decision occasioned by a tour of the park given to the Secretary at your invitation. The ACHP has a long history in advocating for the protection of the unique resources of the Greater Chaco region and is pleased to see Congress and the Department of the Interior work collaboratively to promote their long-term preservation.

Charged by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) to advise the President and the Congress on historic preservation matters, the ACHP's perspective on the challenges facing Chaco is twofold. First, a primary mission of the ACHP is to oversee and frequently engage in the federal historic preservation review process, established by Section 106 of the NHPA. In that capacity, the ACHP has been involved in Section 106 reviews for oil and gas development in the Chaco region for decades. We are fully aware of the impacts that such development can have on the fragile historic resources of this profoundly significant area. Second, the NHPA directs the ACHP to cooperate with the Department of the Interior in the Department's coordination of United States participation in the World Heritage Convention. To meet this statutory responsibility, the ACHP brings its expertise in the protection of historic properties, taking particular note of the treaty obligations of the United States government to protect and preserve the nation's World Heritage Sites – including Chaco – for future generations.

The ACHP wrote earlier this year to the House Committee on Natural Resources in support of H.R. 2181, the Chaco Cultural Heritage Protection Act (introduced jointly in the Senate as S.1079, copy of letter of support attached). As you know, by creating the "Chaco Cultural Heritage Withdrawal Area," the legislation would remove development threats on federal lands within and adjacent to the Chaco National Historical Park and other portions of this World Heritage Site. H.R. 2181/S.1079 would take great strides in ensuring the long-term protection of this unique resource. I applaud your leadership on this legislation.

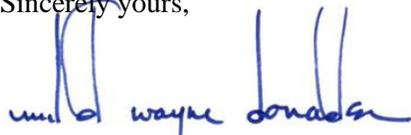
The ACHP would like to take this opportunity to also note that other actions, such as a comprehensive management plan for lands under the control of both the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management, the protection from development for non-federal lands within the Chaco landscape, and the engagement of local Indian tribes in the management of the greater Chaco Culture area, are desirable to

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further protect and preserve these important resources. The ACHP would welcome the opportunity to work with the Congress and the Department of the Interior in the future to advance these goals.

Sincerely yours,



Milford Wayne Donaldson

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Attachment