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Office of the Governor

March 18, 2024

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

Dear Mr. President,

As you have acknowledged, the high cost of housing is hurting families across America. Nowhere is this problem more acute than in the State of Nevada, where strong growth over the last three decades has combined with high inflation, increased interest rates, and dwindling housing inventory. These factors have transformed our housing challenges into a housing crisis. Uniquely, with 85% of Nevada land federally owned and managed, the lack of collaboration by our federal partners, including this administration, has greatly limited our ability to take action. The federal government continues to arbitrarily restrict statewide growth, inhibiting our communities from realizing their vision for the future. I urge you to cut the bureaucratic red tape that prevents Nevada communities from achieving their housing and economic development goals.

Nevada's median home prices rank well above the national average, with the median price of a home in Northern Nevada at nearly \$550,000 and in Southern Nevada at \$445,000. Nevadans are also struggling to find affordable rental homes. The lack of attainable workforce housing is taking a toll on Nevadans' quality of life, hurting our ability to expand our workforce, and restricting opportunities for economic growth. To address the housing crisis, the State of Nevada and our local communities need to access the land that is within their respective borders. Unfortunately, we must rely on acts of Congress and severely backlogged federal agencies to secure the land necessary to grow. The federal process for privatizing land for development is too slow, too complex, and contributes to higher costs for Nevada families seeking homeownership.

Additionally, your administration recently created a 500,000-acre national monument in Southern Nevada. If your administration met Nevada's housing crisis with the same level of resolve, our communities would have room to grow and would be more equipped to meet pressing housing needs. According to a recent study, the region averages 6.7 single-family homes per acre.¹ If your administration conveyed Clark County 50,000 acres, the equivalent to a mere 10% of the recent national monument designation, it would double the land available for development in Clark County, which is currently slated to run out by 2032. This land would also provide for the potential construction of up to 335,000 new homes. While this specific example is limited to Clark County, Washoe County and the remaining rural counties of Nevada face similar concerns.

¹ Southern Nevada Housing Market and Land Availability Analysis: <http://www.appliedanalysis.com/landavailability/>



As it stands, the process of making federal land available for housing development can take years. Even after Congress identifies land for community use, the process, which includes land surveys, appraisals, and environmental impact assessments, is notorious for slowing timelines and escalating project costs. In an effort to mitigate some of these delays, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in November 2023, which aims to improve the policy and procedures for public land disposal for affordable housing under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA; Public Law 105-263).² Good intentions notwithstanding, lands subject to this new guidance have yet to see any material improvement in terms of putting them in the hands of people that can actually use them.

Mr. President, we can – and we must – do better for the people of Nevada. Specifically, I urge you to direct the Department of the Interior to complete a statewide Resource Management Plan (RMP) or update the 18 RMPs that govern management of most of the Silver State. RMPs determine appropriate uses of public lands and should provide a strategy for addressing the housing crisis. Sadly, the average age of a RMP in Nevada is over 22 years. These plans are failing communities across our state. Updating these plans will take time and resources, but doing so is essential to streamlining the current process and reducing project timelines and costs.

Despite spending billions on laws like the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the federal government still struggles to efficiently deliver on public land conveyances due to a lack of resources and manpower. Our communities should not have to wait years for the federal government to act, particularly when Congress has already passed laws to de-federalize land.

Since the 1990s, Nevada's bipartisan congressional delegation has broadly supported and championed federal land disposal legislation. These legislative efforts have provided some Nevada communities with land to accommodate growing populations, essential infrastructure, and new economic opportunities. Unfortunately, your administration has not championed such legislation, and our cities, counties, and citizens are suffering as a result. I ask that you immediately call for the release of land in Nevada and direct your administration to prioritize the actions needed to address the current housing crisis.

Nevada can no longer afford the federal government's broken and backlogged bureaucracy. We need the federal government to be a partner in addressing the housing crisis and act immediately to reduce the barriers and bureaucracy that stand between Nevada families and affordable homes. I hope you will join me to work on these important issues.

Sincerely,



Joe Lombardo
Governor

² Policy and Procedures for Public Land Disposal for Affordable Housing Pursuant to the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (Section 7(b)) Memorandum of Understanding By and Between U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
[<https://www.blm.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2023-11/NV-IM-2024-005%20att%201%202023%20BLM%20HUD%20MOU%20signed.pdf>]