

June 6, 2022

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

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned Latino state legislators, call on the Biden Administration to conserve lands, waters, and oceans and ensure equitable access for Latino communities through the America the Beautiful Initiative.

The conservation of our lands and oceans is critical in ensuring that all communities have access to them and their benefits. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how spending time in nature positively impacts our mental health and physical wellbeing. But underscored a disturbing reality: Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities are three times more likely to live in nature-deprived areas than white communities. This wide disparity also illustrates the disproportionate share of the costs associated with nature's decline.

Equitable access to the outdoors not only helps physical and mental health but also the ecosystem that acts as a buffer against natural disasters. The equitable conservation of nature can provide critical resilience for coastal and inland communities while also providing opportunities for leisure, recreation, and tradition.

There is broad public support for equitable access and conservation. In a recent poll, 81 percent of respondents supported providing funding to ensure communities who have historically lacked access have safe, nearby parks and natural places. A separate poll found 4 out of 5 voters nationwide favor a plan to protect at least 30 percent of America's land, ocean areas, and inland waters by 2030. It's clear the public believes in the importance of equitable access and the value of 30x30. As Latino state legislators, we believe 30x30 is the bold action this country needs to equitably conserve and provide access to our nation's land and ocean areas.

Despite the seeming geographical barrier that exists between inland states and coastal areas, we know that anthropogenic activities throughout the United States affect the ocean. As state leaders, we recognize the inextricable connection that coastal and inland communities have to the ocean. The conservation of our lands, waters, and ocean areas cannot be separated from one another. Oftentimes, marine habitat degradation is addressed in isolation from land-based conservation. This is despite the ocean encompassing most of our planet and coastal ecosystems serving as crucial buffers against extreme weather events. Latinx communities, like 40 percent of the United States population, live in coastal counties and engage in cultural, recreational, and/or

economic activities that depend on a healthy ocean. As Latino state legislators, we want to emphasize the importance and urgency of protecting coastal and marine habitats.

We especially recognize the impacts that runoff pollution from upstream sources can have on marine and coastal habitats. The hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico, the declining health of the Chesapeake Bay, and the harmful algae blooms in Florida all serve as examples of the effects of inland and coastal activities on our ocean. We, therefore, urge our colleagues and the federal government to look at conservation holistically and recognize that the entire nation needs to act to create long-lasting change.

30x30 is a natural, common-sense solution for inland and coastal communities. That's why we, the undersigned legislators, support a national goal to conserve at least 30 percent of the nation's lands and ocean areas by 2030 with a strong emphasis on ensuring equitable access for Latino communities and prioritizing healthy oceans and coastal ecosystems.

We believe the Biden Administration can bring us closer to accomplishing this goal by ensuring that the \$1 billion America the Beautiful Challenge, a partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, allocates funding in a manner that is consistent with the size and needs of Latino communities nationwide. This means encouraging the prioritization of applicants that advance equitable access to coastal and inland resources for Latino communities.

We applaud the Biden Administration for this announcement and advocate that the initiative's funding adequately supports Latino communities as we work towards 30x30 nationwide.

CC:

Chair Brenda Mallory, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Secretary Debra Haaland, United States Department of Interior

Sincerely,

Arizona Senator Rosanna Gabaldon
(AZ-02)

California Assemblymember Luz Rivas
(CA-39)

Colorado Representative Monica Duran
(CO-24)

Connecticut Representative Geraldo Reyes
(CT-75)

Florida Representative Daisy Morales
(FL-48)

Hawaii Senator Donovan Dela Cruz
(HI-22)

Maryland Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk
(MD-21)

Nevada Assemblymember Cecelia González
(NV-16)

Nevada Assemblymember Sandra Jauregui
(NV-41)

Nevada Assemblymember Elaine Marzola
(NV-21)

New Mexico Representative Angelica Rubio
(NM-35)

New Mexico Representative Patricia Roybal Caballero
(NM-13)

New Mexico Representative Javier Martinez
(NM-11)

New Mexico Representative Andrea Romero
(NM-46)

New Mexico Senator Sedillo-Lopez
(NM-16)

New Mexico Representative Kristina Ortez
(NM-42)

Oregon Representative Wlnsvey Campos
(OR-28)

Puerto Rico Senator William Villafañe
(PR-00)

Utah Representative Angela Romero
(UT-26)

Texas Representative Penny Morales-Shaw
(TX-148)