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Contact:

Angel Amaya, aamaya@worc.org, (361) 779-2572

Tracie Moss, tmoss@westernnativevoice.org, (406) 869-1938

Nicole Donaghy, ndonaghy@ndnativevote.org, (701) 202-0927

PRESS RELEASE

**Interior Secretary Haaland Confirmed by US Senate
Western Grassroots Groups Applaud Historic Appointment**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Debra Haaland, a 35th generation New Mexican and an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo, was confirmed today by the United States Senate to serve as our nation’s 54th Secretary of the Interior. Haaland will be the first Native American Interior Secretary and first Native American Cabinet member. Representative Haaland’s leadership in natural resource conservation and her perspective on tribal and Indigenous issues make her uniquely qualified to be Secretary of the Interior.

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior is the chief steward of America’s public lands, minerals, and natural resources. Secretary Haaland will also be responsible for carrying out the United States’ trust responsibilities to Indigenous peoples. Secretary Haaland has championed vital issues in Congress by working to advance coal mine, hardrock, and oil and gas reclamation legislation; cut air pollution from oil and gas wells; address climate change; and ensure action on the crisis MMIP, missing and murdered Indigenous people.

“On behalf of myself, the board, my staff and our members, we are elated and would like to congratulate Rep. Deb Haaland on her confirmation as Secretary of Interior. This is a historic moment to have a member of the first peoples of this land, now at the helm of the agency that oversees natural resources, public land management and the relationship between the federal government and tribes. This is a landmark moment for Indigenous leaders young and old, who will now see someone like them with shared values and experiences in a top leadership position in a presidential cabinet. We cannot overstate the positive influence and impact this moment has for Indigenous leadership both now and the next generations to come.” **said Ronnie Jo Horse, Executive Director of Western Native Voice.**

“Secretary Haaland’s appointment is a win for all Westerners. Western lands and landowners have been stretched thin by the previous administration’s prioritization of fossil fuel extraction above all other uses,” said **Barbara Vasquez of Cowdrey, Colorado, a member of the Western Organization of Resource Councils.** “With vast swaths of public land locked up for development and protections for the people who live on and rely on this land eviscerated, Secretary Haaland’s leadership could not be more timely and necessary. As a New Mexican and an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo, she understands the need to reduce the impact of rampant oil and gas development on our land, air, water, and people. Requiring these

corporations to pay for their cleanup and restoration rather than leaving the mess for us will put thousands of Westerners back to work while protecting our farmland, forests, and rivers.”

“Representative Haaland’s confirmation to the Department of Interior is a monumental moment for Indigenous people. For the last two years, she has fought against the destructive acts and policies that disproportionately affect our ancestral Indigenous lands and communities of color. Representative Haaland understands the critical need to reform the Department to ensure that these abuses never occur again.” **Nicole Donaghy, Executive Director of North Dakota Native Vote**

“Ft. Berthold Protectors of Water and Earth Rights is celebrating the appointment of Interior Secretary Haaland,” **said Lisa DeVille, founding member of Ft. Berthold POWER, from Mandaree, North Dakota.** “Haaland’s appointment is an important step in having Indigenous representation in decision making positions. We hope she will look at the tribal fossil fuel programs to ensure our sacred land, air, and water is protected. The Secretary is responsible for significant trust responsibilities to Indigenous people, and we expect Haaland to finally prioritize the rights and voices of everyday Indigenous people who are protected by national environmental laws.”

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[Western Native Voice](#) is a non-profit, non-partisan social justice organization working to inspire Native leadership through community organizing, education, leadership, and advocacy. With 7% of Montana’s population being Native American living almost evenly split between reservation and urban areas, WNV organizes in rural and urban communities using a culturally tailored community organizing and citizen education model to build Native leadership.

[The Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)](#) is a network of grassroots organizations that span seven of the Western states with more than 15,000 members, whose mission is to advance the vision of a democratic, sustainable, and just society through community action. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.

[North Dakota Native Vote \(NDNV\)](#) counteract the ongoing colonization of our lands, minds, and bodies by identifying systems that continue to subjugate our communities. We work to learn disparities in civil rights, food systems, energy security/democracy, climate chaos, and policy that disproportionately affects our people and how we interact within and contribute to these systems.

[Fort Berthold POWER](#) is an affiliate of [Dakota Resource Council](#). POWER’s mission is to conserve and protect the land, water, and air on which all life depends. We are committed to working toward a sustainable society with an awareness for all life. We will promote unity with our communities, partners, leaders, and the world around us. Fort Berthold Reservation is one of the most oil rich reservations in the United States. With more than 1,500 active oil and gas wells, Fort Berthold is currently experiencing both the environmental and social impacts and the financial benefits of the Bakken oil boom.