

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 20, 2012

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Members of Congress representing western Colorado, we write regarding the Chimney Rock Archeological Area located on United States Forest Service land in the southwest corner of our state. We are strong supporters of an ongoing effort to make Chimney Rock a National Monument. While efforts to this point have focused on legislation – S. 508 (Bennet/Udall) in the Senate and H.R. 2621 in the House (Tipton) – we are interested in exploring all possible avenues to achieve National Monument recognition for this remarkable area. To that end, several stakeholders in the community – including the local mayor of Pagosa Springs, CO and the Archuleta County Commissioners – have suggested the possibility of you using your authority under the Antiquities Act of 1906 to achieve the same goal as our bills in Congress. We write today to explore such an effort.

Chimney Rock is considered by many to be the most significant cultural site managed by the Forest Service nationwide, yet it lacks a designation equal to that stature. This geologic and cultural marvel sits on roughly 4,700 acres of public land within the San Juan National Forest. The ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians occupied the site between A.D. 925 and 1125 and Chimney Rock remains significant to the Pueblo and other descendent tribes. The cultural artifacts and the rich history surrounding the twin spires of Chimney Rock earned the location listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

More recently, the geologic and cultural importance of Chimney Rock has been highlighted by the local community – including the mayor, county commission and local Chamber of Commerce – as they asked us to introduce legislation that would designate Chimney Rock a National Monument. S. 508 and H.R. 2621 have both received favorable hearings in their respective chambers. S. 3303 (Bennet/Udall) in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress was favorably reported out of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in a bipartisan voice vote.

A National Monument designation would not only give Chimney Rock the true recognition it deserves, but would also help secure the economic future of the region. Estimates from local economic development agencies indicate that a Monument designation would provide significant growth for local businesses near the site.

Given this great potential, we would ask that the Administration engage in a discussion with the local community to determine whether Chimney Rock warrants designation as a National Monument through your aforementioned authority. We feel such a discussion would be welcomed with enthusiasm, provided the Administration is committed to doing robust outreach to the local Native American tribes (including tribes outside the State of Colorado) and

stakeholders in the local community, and provided any subsequent Presidential proclamation would adhere very closely to the parameters of the legislation pending in Congress – including protection for all existing uses at the site and no additional expenditure of taxpayer dollars.

While we still intend to pursue our legislation, we are not naïve to the realities of Congressional gridlock in Washington. We feel the future economic benefits of a National Monument designation are significant for the region, and those benefits shouldn't be forestalled because Congress can't act in a timely manner. We would request that you move forward in outlining an orderly Administrative process to determine if Chimney Rock warrants National Monument designation under the Antiquities Act.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL F. BENNET  
U.S. Senator



MARK UDALL  
U.S. Senator



SCOTT TIPTON  
U.S. Representative

CC: The Honorable Thomas Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture