

op-ed—"The Federal Government Should Follow the Constitution and Sell Its Western Lands." This is from the man who is now charged with running the agency that oversees our public lands. It is appalling.

BLM manages 245 million acres on behalf of the American people. Managing these public lands is the central mission of the job, and he doesn't think there should be any. It is no wonder he is trouble for western Republican candidates. Poll after poll of westerners show overwhelming support for public lands among Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. Selling off our national heritage to the highest bidder is extreme and extremely unpopular.

Mr. Pendley has been singularly focused on renting out our public lands to extraction industries to the exclusion of other purposes, such as conservation, outdoor recreation, and preservation of cultural and historic values.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy and Minerals for the Department of the Interior in the 1980s, Pendley was a tireless advocate for opening up public lands, from the Outer Continental Shelf to wilderness areas, to drilling and mining. When he was in charge of coal leasing in the interior in the 1980s, he helped coal companies get a sweetheart deal—leasing 1.6 million tons of coal in the Powder River Basin at bargain basement prices. The General Accounting Office concluded that Federal taxpayers received about \$100 million below fair market value for that sale, or about \$286 million in today's dollars.

Mr. Pendley was removed from his position after that GAO report, and he hasn't changed one bit over the years. As executive director of the Mountain States Legal Foundation for 30 years, Pendley fought tooth and nail for drilling and mining on our public lands. If left unchecked, I have no doubt Mr. Pendley will continue to turn back the clock on 60 years of our Nation reckoning with the devastating consequences of recklessly extracting from the Earth.

Second, Mr. Pendley's well-documented racist attitudes make him unfit for his role. He has disdain for Native Americans—their Tribal sovereignty and their religious practices. He is very anti-immigrant. He smears the Black Lives Matter movement. He called Native religious views: "pantheism, paganism, and cultural myths." He has fought against protecting their sacred sites on Federal lands.

It is Pendley's BLM that wanted to hold virtual meetings to determine the future of the greater Chaco Canyon landscape at the same time that the Navajo Nation was facing one of the worst COVID-19 outbreaks in the country. And in that area that has some of the lowest broadband rates in the Nation—now talk about tone-deaf—as the vice chair of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, I am here to say that

Mr. Pendley has no business managing lands that are home to sacred Native sites. He has questioned the basis of Tribal sovereignty and even Tribal recognition. He wrote: "The day may come sooner than many expect given that, with ever-declining blood quantum per tribal member, recognized tribes may soon be little more than associations of financial convenience."

Let's call Mr. Pendley's offensive statement what it is: overt racism. But his disdain for people of color is not limited to Native Americans. He has called undocumented immigrants "a cancer." He has claimed immigration will lead to: "You and I permanently losing the country we love." He has claimed undocumented immigrants create violent crime, crowded schools, and spread disease. Mr. Pendley's racism has no place in today's America. He is unqualified to manage public lands at a time when we all should be working to make them more accessible to all America.

People of color who have business before the Bureau of Land Management, as many do every day, have every right to wonder: Is the deck stacked against them? It shouldn't be that way.

And, finally, a third reason that all of us should demand Mr. Pendley be removed from his position: He is a climate change denier. The science of climate change that is happening and that is human-caused is well established. We are years and years beyond any scientific argument on these points. Just open your eyes and look at the wildfires that are raging throughout the West, forcing people to evacuate their homes and making wide swaths of the West look like an apocalyptic scene out over a Hollywood movie. Yet Pendley has claimed that climate change is like unicorns—neither exist.

Pendley's hostility to science comes as no surprise. He is working for a President who claimed just yesterday, as he made a belated visit to California, that "I don't think science knows," referring to climate change. The President is saying: "I don't think science knows."

The President claims he knows, insisting, "It will start getting cooler." This President tries to undermine any institution that challenges his world view—whether it is science, the press, our national intelligence agencies, or the courts.

But while Mr. Pendley and the President deny the reality of climate change, right now, today, in California and Oregon, BLM and other public lands are burning. While they put their heads in the sand on climate change, the families who have lost loved ones in this unprecedented fire season in that part of the country and the thousands who have lost homes don't have that luxury. In the view of William Pendley, the President, and his administration, the West is a place to be plundered for natural resources and then left to burn. And while Pendley

and the Trump administration don't think the Interior Department has any role to play combating climate change, in fact, one-quarter—25 percent—of all U.S. carbon emissions come from fossil fuels extracted from public lands.

Our public lands are a big part of the climate change problem. Instead of being a source of pollution, public lands must be an integral part of the climate solution. William Pendley's vision for public lands is some terrible caricature that should be consigned to the history books, where our public lands are to be exploited, not conserved, where Native people are scorned and people of color are not seen, and where climate change does not exist.

William Pendley is an extremist, and he was never going to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate. It is time he is shown the door.

I now turn to my colleagues who are with me on the floor. I am very proud to introduce my good friend and colleague, New Mexico's junior—soon-to-be senior Senator—Senator MARTIN HEINRICH. Martin led the entire Senate Democratic caucus in a letter to the President opposing Mr. Pendley's nomination as BLM Director, and once the nomination was withdrawn, he led the caucus urging the Secretary to remove Mr. Pendley from his Acting position.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

HURRICANE LAURA

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, at the forbearance of my colleagues, if I can interpolate, if you will, and I will yield back. Thank you very much.

As I speak, Hurricane Sally threatens the gulf coast, including parts of Louisiana. Our prayers are with those in the path of Sally. I just spoke with the Coast Guard admiral in charge, and the Coast Guard is ready should there be a need.

But in the concern over Sally and other issues, we must remember the aftermath of Hurricane Laura, which made landfall August 27 in Cameron, LA, as a category 4-5 hurricane. In terms of wind speed, this is 150 miles an hour. A more powerful storm in that regard is Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Ike, and others.

As you might imagine, a storm of such magnitude left death, destruction, and pain from Southwest Louisiana into Texas to North Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi.

There were 25 people who died directly or indirectly because of Hurricane Laura, and hundreds of thousands of lives have been upended. As one example—one measure—as of yesterday, 145,000 people in Louisiana have filed for assistance with FEMA. That is expected to grow to roughly 2,800 people a day applying for assistance.

Now, the sentiment at home is if you are without electricity, as 97 percent of Cameron Parish goes without electricity, and you are without internet, as most people are, the fear is that

folks have forgotten about Hurricane Laura, that recovery efforts will be stalled, and things will be ignored as attention turns to other issues—COVID-19, Presidential race, et cetera. And, anecdotally, there is, of course, evidence that public opinion has slipped.

Last week, I spoke with Gail McGovern, the president of the American Red Cross, who told me that donations are lagging well below that which the Red Cross had hoped to receive to cover the cost of their response. She assured me, though, that the Red Cross would still do everything needed. I saw testimony of that, by the way. I flew from Louisiana to Washington, DC, yesterday, and the jet was full of Red Cross volunteers. We are so appreciative.

I assure folks back home, just to say, that I did get a call from President Trump just as the hurricane hit. He assured me that whatever resources were needed, he would make sure they were there. As I told folks in Louisiana, there was an audience of one paying attention, a very important audience, and that is the President.

In this speech, I hope to continue to bring this hurricane and its aftermath to the attention of other fellow Americans because fellow Americans take care of ourselves and take care of each other. So I am here to be a voice for the people of Louisiana and share a story so that you may know what we are facing at home.

Again, I am appreciative of the United Way, American Red Cross, President Trump, and others for swiftly doing all they can do to help us through this recovery, but let's tell the story.

Here is a wonderful story from Lake Arthur, LA. She probably doesn't like the fact that I am showing this. She didn't like how she looked. I think she looks fantastic. This is Bethel Boudreaux, a great American patriot and a great Louisiana name. If you look at this picture, there is a tree that has fallen over the guy's house. There is a fellow in the tree cutting down limbs that is on top of his house. Here she is with a tree behind her and all the debris associated with it holding up an American flag. Now, her concern was that if we showed this picture, we recognize that her husband, a veteran, is familiar with how damaged flags should be destroyed, but this had been fluttering during the hurricane, and she just wanted to show it.

She has got a smile. This is 1 or 2 days after this devastating hurricane. With all this, in the spirit of Americans, she is holding that flag, and she is smiling. She is a great American patriot, but it also shows the attitude of Americans and the attitudes of people in Louisiana. We are resilient in the face of adversity.

There is more than enough adversity to go around. Let me just give you a couple of stories that are on our Facebook page. Mike Williams from Lake Charles gave our office a tour of

his home. His metal roof was completely ripped off. Water came all through his house. The ceiling is falling in, and every single room has extensive water damage.

There is 20-year-old Hannah Vinson, who shared that her childhood home was gone. The roof collapsed, flooded, and a tree fell in her mother's bedroom and all across their yard. She has this semester off from school because of lack of access and expenses she cannot cover, even though she works.

She told us:

It's overwhelming. People say why even go back when your school is destroyed? I start a new career, and that has to come to an end because where I work is gone now.

There are thousands more stories like theirs. But amid the devastation, there is hope. I am inspired by those who rushed to help however they could.

The Cajun Navy is an organization of volunteers who respond to disasters. They deployed immediately and continue to help today, delivering thousands of meals, clearing debris, helping people meet energy needs, and assisting where they can.

I recently went to Central Louisiana to hand out supplies and meet with storm victims and volunteers. I met a woman named Mandy in Hineston. Mandy has been loading up trailers of donated groceries. She takes them to the rural parts of the State, where folks can't access critical supplies in Central and Western Louisiana. This is a critical service because folks on the back roads couldn't get out, and there was a gas shortage in some storm-affected areas.

While I do believe Hurricane Laura recovery needs more attention nationally, I am so thankful for the thousands of workers who came to rebuild the electrical grid, as well as individuals and churches and nonprofits who came to help. There is a Facebook video from YAI Paks—a nonprofit organization in Clarksville, TN—who came down to Lake Charles with portable showers and trailers of supplies. The lady in the video said they handed out so many meals that they lost count.

I cannot say thank you enough to our fellow Americans and those from Louisiana who saw a need and answered the call to serve. Now I ask my colleagues to do the same.

Local governments' resources have been stretched to the limit because of COVID-19—tax base destroyed. Damage assessments are still underway, but we will likely need a disaster supplemental from Congress to continue the recovery. I ask my fellow Senators to consider the plight of Hurricane Laura victims and support such a bill, which should include California due to the terrible wildfires and perhaps those affected by Sally. Our prayers are with all of those as well.

Local government resources have been stretched to the limit because of COVID-19 in Louisiana, but I suspect in California and Alabama and Mississippi as well.

In June, I introduced legislation to do away with the FEMA cost share for local governments for 2020—for this year—given the strain on their budgets caused by COVID. I urge my colleagues to pass this bill.

Lastly, let's just reassure my constituents in Louisiana that they are not forgotten. The largest storm in our State's history made news for about 2 days with hardly a mention after. Don't forget about Hannah, who lost her childhood home and her job, or about Mike, who lost his house to the rain and wind, and about the nearly 150,000 people asking for help.

Americans are at our best when we help those in need. The time is now to extend that support once more.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT ACTING
DIRECTOR WILLIAM PENDLEY

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I want to start by thanking my colleague Senator UDALL for organizing us to talk about the current Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management. I say "acting" because this is an individual who would not be able to be confirmed by this body. But I want to take a step back and walk through a little bit about why this is important.

There was once a strong young man who rose up through New York City society. He led American soldiers in battle and went west to learn what it meant to truly to work hard on America's western landscapes.

This man took all of his hard-driving spirit with him to the White House and put it to work delivering for the American people. He took on big trusts and gigantic corporations that had monopolized the American economy and put a stranglehold on American workers. Despite coming from a wealthy New York family, this man focused on delivering a "Square Deal" to working-class Americans. But perhaps his most important and lasting legacy was this: After our country's previous century of explosive growth across the North American continent, he saw clearly that we needed to rein in the pillaging of our forests, the draining of our wetlands, the destruction of America's wildlife, and the loss of irreplaceable cultural resources. He saw that we had only one chance left to protect the splendors of our uniquely American landscapes for future generations.

When Donald Trump looks up every once in a while from his television screen or from yet another tweetstorm portrait on his phone to the portrait of that great American President, I am sure he sometimes tells himself that he could be just like Teddy Roosevelt.

I am sure he imagines that he is equally deserving of a place on Mount Rushmore and that if it weren't for his bone spurs, he could have been just as tough as Teddy, charging up San Juan Hill or riding on horseback through the Dakota Badlands rather than jumping