

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 23, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Burgum and Secretary Turner:

I write regarding your recent announcement of the Joint Task Force on Federal Land for Housing, formed through the partnership between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). I applaud the formation of such a Task Force to utilize federal land as a partial solution to addressing the nation's housing supply crisis. As the Task Force develops its initiatives and recommendations, I encourage a balanced approach to land development that prioritizes environmental stewardship, respects tribal sovereignty, and involves meaningful engagement with local, state, and tribal communities to ensure housing developments meet their specific needs.

Everyday American families are struggling to afford a place to live. Over the past two decades, housing costs have outpaced income growth in the United States, exacerbating the rent burden and pushing homeownership increasingly out of reach for many Americans.¹ Home prices have soared 47 percent since early 2020 and 115 percent since 2010.² In 2023, the median home price rose to 5.1 times the median household income, up from 3.2 in the 1990s.³ With these rising costs, over 21 million renter households now spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing and utilities.⁴ This rise in prices is driven by a chronic housing shortage of an estimated 4 million to 7 million homes.⁵ Given these mounting challenges, it is imperative that we pursue every available avenue to reduce the burden of housing costs on families and make home ownership an accessible cornerstone of the American Dream. Especially in Western states that have patchworks of federal and private land, improving building opportunities on some federal land could be a creative solution to housing shortages in some communities.

¹ U.S. Department of Treasury, "Rent, House Prices, and Demographics," June 24, 2024, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/featured-stories/rent-house-prices-and-demographics>.

² Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, "New Report Shows Housing Costs Strain Owners and Renters Alike; Millions Priced out of Homeownership," June 20, 2024, <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/press-releases/new-report-shows-housing-costs-strain-owners-and-renters-alike-millions-priced-out>.

³ Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, "Home Prices Far Outpace Incomes," <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/son-2024-price-to-income-map>.

⁴ [American Community Survey](#)

⁵ Pew Charitable Trust, "Survey Finds Large Majorities Favor Policies to Enable More Housing," November 30, 2023 <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2023/11/30/survey-finds-large-majorities-favor-policies-to-enable-more-housing>

To better understand the Task Force's objectives and its impact, I respectfully request answers to the following:

1. Please provide a list of the names of Task Force members along with their roles and areas of expertise.
2. Please provide information on any scheduled meetings or deadlines guiding this effort.
3. Please confirm whether meeting notes or reports from the Task Force will be made publicly available to ensure transparency in its operations.
4. Please describe the methodology being used to inventory available federal lands for residential development and clarify whether this inventory will be made publicly accessible. What specific criteria will be used to determine the suitability of federal lands for residential development? Will factors such as proximity to transportation, schools, and employment centers be considered in the decision-making process?
5. How will the Task Force coordinate with other federal agencies, such as the Department of Transportation or the Environmental Protection Agency, to address transportation and environmental concerns during the development of these lands?
6. Will the Task Force explore partnerships with private developers, and if so, what safeguards will be in place to ensure that these developments remain affordable and meet the needs of local communities?
7. Please describe the specific process through which the Task Force plans to engage with affected communities, including tribal and rural communities. Will there be opportunities for public comment or hearings?

Addressing these questions will help ensure a clearer understanding of the Task Force's initiatives and assist policymakers in advocating for its objectives, including legislative action, if necessary. I look forward to working together to increase access to quality, affordable housing in our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruben Gallego", written in a cursive style.

Ruben Gallego
United States Senator