

POLICY BRIEF ON REP. RYAN ZINKE

Nominee for Interior Secretary

December 21, 2016

This briefing on Montana U.S. Rep. Ryan Zinke, the nominee for secretary of the Department of Interior, provides an overview of his professional expertise, political record, and potential actions he may take on key issues if confirmed by the Senate.

Zinke served in the Montana Senate from 2009 to 2011, where he was viewed as a “moderate Republican,” but has become more conservative since then. For example, in 2010, he signed a letter that recognized global warming as a threat, and promoted clean-energy legislation, but in 2014 he said he had seen no evidence that rising CO2 levels affected the climate.

Since 2015, Zinke has served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for the State of Montana. In the 2016 House election, Zinke ran unopposed in the Republican primary and faced defeated Democratic Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau (Blackfeet) in the general election. Zinke currently serves on the Armed Service Committee and the Natural Resources Committee. He is also a member of the the following subcommittees: Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Energy and Mineral Resources, Federal Lands, and Seapower and Projection Forces.

Prior to his political career, Zinke was a Navy SEAL. In 2012, Zinke started Special Operations for America (SOFA), a super-PAC to support Mitt Romney’s Presidential Election. SOFA later campaigned and fundraised for Zinke, and paid his business, Continental Divide International, for “fundraising consulting” and “strategy consulting.”¹

Trump’s appointment of Zinke is a controversial move for congressional Republicans, as Senator Mitch McConnell had approached him about running for Senate in 2018.²

Tribal Affairs

Zinke publicly applauds grants to Montana tribes for activities such as tribal law enforcement (mentioning violence against Native Women) and transportation. In his support of the Department of Interior Appropriations, he specifically called out continued support of IHS.

Zinke does not support the selling of public land. Trump’s advisors picked Zinke over Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers because of her support of selling of public land. Zinke resigned from his post as a delegate to the Republican nominating convention in protest of a plank in the party’s draft platform, which would require that “certain” public lands be transferred to state control. Zinke said that he endorses “better management of federal land” rather than transfer.³

- Voted Yea (Passage) - HR 538 - Native American Energy Act
- Cosponsored - HR 511 - Tribal Labor Sovereignty Act of 2015
- Cosponsored - HR 5633 - Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act of 2016
- Introduced - Certainty for States and Tribes Act and legislation to federally recognize the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe



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Public Health

- Voted Yea (Passage) - HR 3134 - Defund Planned Parenthood Act, 2015
- Voted Yea - HR 2577 - Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017 (also appropriated funds for Zika response)
- Cosponsored - HR 596 - To repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and replace it with patient-centered, free market reforms
- Introduced - HR 527 - Veterans Access to Community Care Act of 2015

References:

1. Redden, Molly. (November 1, 2013). "[GOP Congressional Candidate Using Campaign Money Scheme Pioneered by...Stephen Colbert.](#)" www.motherjones.com. Mother Jones.
2. Burnsdec, Alexander, & Martin, Jonathon. (Dec. 16, 2016) "[McConnell Eyed Ryan Zinke for a Senate Seat. Donald Trump Had Other Ideas.](#)" www.nytimes.com. New York Times.
3. Lutey, Tom. (July 15, 2016). "[Zinke resigns delegate post over public lands disagreement; still will speak at RNC.](#)" billingsgazette.com. Billings Gazette.

