

Senator _____
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20240

September 25, 2002

Dear Senator _____:

We are writing to express our concern about the conflicts of interest surrounding Deputy Interior Secretary J. Steven Griles. The Washington Post (“Official’s Lobbying Ties Decried, September 25, 2002”) recently revealed a wide range of conflicts of interest and examples of Griles continuing to work from the Interior Department on behalf of former industry clients. I urge you to call on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to immediately hold oversight hearings into these conflicts of interest.

The Post article revealed that Mr. Griles has continued to meet with and work on major issues of interest to his former clients, in violation of multiple recusal agreements. In May 2002, he attempted to pressure the EPA to change an analysis criticizing the environmental impacts of a coal bed methane project in Wyoming’s Powder River Basin. Mr. Griles previously lobbied on behalf of several coal bed methane companies involved in drilling gas wells on public lands in this region.

He also has a continuing financial arrangement with one of his previous companies, National Environmental Strategies, in which he is receiving \$284,000 annually for the next four years. National Environmental Strategies has a number of energy clients that could benefit greatly from decisions Mr. Griles makes in his position at the Department of the Interior.

As you know, Mr. Griles lobbied for more than 40 coal, oil, gas, and electric companies and trade associations before President Bush nominated him to his post at the Interior Department. Since his confirmation, he has continued to meet with these companies and to advocate for policy changes and rulemakings that will benefit them. In particular, he has met numerous times with industry groups advocating major rollbacks to the Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act.

We believe that public officials must maintain high ethics standards in order to maintain the public’s confidence in the integrity of government actions. As an employee of a public agency, Deputy Secretary Griles should represent the public and not his previous energy companies. Mr. Griles has been involved in critical and controversial public policy decisions air pollution, water pollution and public lands protection. His conflicts of interest appear to compromise his ability to represent the public interest in these decisions, which will have major impacts on communities and the environment.

Due to the seriousness of this matter and the effect it could have on the integrity of the Department of the Interior we urge you to work with the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to immediately hold hearings into this matter.

Sincerely,

Cc: Senator Jeffery Bingaman
Senator Joseph Lieberman