



State-Tribal Relations Committee

66th Montana Legislature

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The Honorable John Hoeven, Chair
The Honorable Tom Udall, Vice Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

August 25, 2020

Dear Chair Hoeven and Vice Chair Udall,

The State-Tribal Relations Committee of the Montana State Legislature, which is a bipartisan committee that acts as a liaison between Montana's tribal, state, and local governments, voted 7-1 on August 24 (Representative Joe Read voting 'no') to applaud the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs for approving the Montana Water Rights Protection Act (S. 3019), sponsored by Senator Daines and co-sponsored by Senator Tester.

The Montana Water Rights Protection Act, if passed, will ratify the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) Water Compact that was passed with bipartisan support by the Montana State Legislature in 2015 and has garnered the support of every major agriculture and water use group in the state.

The CSKT Water Compact would protect both tribal and nontribal water users in Montana and prevent decades of unnecessary and extremely expensive litigation. During the Senate hearing on S. 3019, it was estimated that passage of this legislation would save Montana's agriculture industry approximately \$1.3 billion. S. 3019 would also create over 6,000 jobs in Montana and significantly invest in the rehabilitation of aging water systems that directly impact our state's production agriculture and critical riparian habitat.

The agreement contained within S. 3019 has been decades in the making and has included years of extensive public comment, review, and input from all stakeholders involved.

It is our hope that, with the unanimous approval of S. 3019 by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, the U.S. Senate will continue to move this agreement forward in Congress.

The Montana State-Tribal Relations Committee encourages the U.S. Senate to act swiftly and decisively to support this bipartisan legislation to provide financial and water right certainty to all Montanans. We thank you for your continued support and leadership on this important legislation.

Respectfully,


Senator Jason Small, Chair


Representative Rae Peppers, Vice Chair

Cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Steve Daines
The Honorable Jon Tester