

# CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

DELEGATION OFFICE  
STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 29, 2021

Alejandra Y. Castillo  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development  
Economic Development Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Herbert Hoover Building, Room 74014  
Fourteenth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Castillo:

The New Mexico Congressional Delegation writes in support of the application submitted by the Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (NWNMCOG) for their FY2021 American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge, La Ristra Northwest, as funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). This grant, EDA-HDQ-ARPBBS-2021-2006976, will allow for investments in the local economy, workforce, and communities in terms of equitable economic development, career pathways, and quality of jobs in the future.

In April, the Department of Commerce coauthored the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization report for President Biden and recommended this area receive preference on federal grant applications. NWNMCOG is working on a regional economic development approach for new industries to employ displaced coal and power plant workers from the declining coal industry. This plan includes eight counties in four states, with six coal fired power plants and five coal mines. These plants and mines have either closed in the past year, in the process of closing, or will more than likely will be shuttered prior to their current decommissioning date. The area also encompasses four tribal nations.

NWNMCOG is planning for long-term economic development along with strong environmental justice and equity components and shovel ready projects. Their application seeks funding for

broadband in underserved communities, workforce development training at three minority serving higher education institutions, blue and green hydrogen hubs to address our nation's energy needs and mitigate climate change, tribal energy sovereignty and economic development related water and waste water for job creating projects on and off tribal lands.

The New Mexico Delegation proudly supports the application submitted by NWNMCOG for the FY2021 American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge as funded by the EDA and we request that you give their application thorough consideration within you agency's guidelines.

Sincerely,

/s/ Martin Heinrich

United States Senator

/s/ Ben Ray Luján

United States Senator

/s/ Teresa Leger Fernandez

United States Representative

/s/ Melanie Stansbury

United States Representative