

December 6, 2021

The Honorable Michael Bennet  
261 Russell Senate Building  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper  
374 Russell Senate Office Building  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Neguse  
1419 Longworth House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Representative Neguse:

We, the undersigned organizations, write on behalf of America's veterans who stand to gain much-deserved recognition and important benefits in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) now being considered in Congress. In addition to ensuring our country is safe and secure, the NDAA includes the Colorado Outdoor Recreation & Economy (CORE) Act, a 400,000-acre public lands protection initiative that is Colorado born, fully vetted, widely supported, and has been passed in the House four times.

The CORE Act combines four community-generated proposals that will protect Colorado's public lands including establishing the nation's first National Historic Landscape at Camp Hale, where the famed 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division trained during WWII. Coloradans have been working to preserve these areas for more than a decade and have gained the support of veterans, sportsmen and sportswomen, the outdoor recreation industry, ranchers, and local governments from across the state.

The areas in the CORE Act -- ranging from wilderness and recreation areas, to the Thompson divide prized by hunters -- provide a place for veterans to heal and regain their footing as they transition home from fighting for our freedoms abroad. That's why the CORE Act is supported by numerous veteran's organizations that use public lands and rivers for therapeutic programs.

In addition to ensuring safe spaces exist for veterans, the public lands included in the CORE Act would mitigate against the worst impacts of climate change, something that the Secretary of Defense highlighted in the Defense Department Climate Risk Analysis, which concluded that climate change has "significant implications for U.S. national security and defense." Public lands and waters are on the front lines of defense for communities by providing healthy air, clean drinking water, and sequestering carbon.

Passing the CORE Act would boost surrounding Colorado economies. According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, outdoor recreation contributes \$62 billion annually to Colorado's economy. This keeps rural and mountain economies healthy and resilient, another stabilizing factor in combating climate change cited in the Defense Department's strategy.

Camp Hale is a legacy well worth protecting. The brave WWII soldiers from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division who trained at Camp Hale and fought courageously to break the German "Wall" in northern Italy left a remarkable legacy. When they returned home after the war, many of them played significant roles in creating and building Colorado's outdoor recreation industry into what it is today. From founding ski areas to innovating mountaineering clothing and equipment, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans have left their indelible mark on the industry. Time is running out to honor the few 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans from WWII who are still with us. It's time to acknowledge them and their contributions by preserving Camp Hale as our country's first National Historic Landscape.

Thank you for your efforts to champion this legislation and advocate for its passage at every opportunity. We urge you to ensure that the CORE Act is included in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Respectfully,

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**CC:**

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The Honorable James Inhofe  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Joseph Manchin III  
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The Honorable John Barrasso  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

The Honorable Adam Smith  
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The Honorable Mike Rogers  
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The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
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