



DC-area Democrats push to block funding for Bureau of Land Management relocation

BY REBECCA BEITSCH - 11/19/19

A coalition of representatives largely from the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area is asking House appropriators to ensure that funds will not be used to move the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) outside of the nation's capital.

The push comes after BLM [sent 159 letters](#) to employees informing them they would be moving to various offices across the West as the public lands agency decentralizes its D.C. office and opens a new headquarters in Grand Junction, Colo.

The controversial plan would leave just 61 of BLM's 10,000 employees in D.C.

The D.C.-area lawmakers, all Democrats, wrote a letter to Rep. [Betty McCollum](#) (D-Minn.), the lead on the subcommittee handling the Department of the Interior's budget, which includes BLM.

"With only a fraction of reassignment employees opting to relocate, we are extremely concerned that moving forward with the relocation would increasingly jeopardize oversight not to mention the protection of public lands from oil and gas interests," lawmakers wrote in a letter spearheaded by Del. [Eleanor Holmes Norton](#) (D-D.C.).

Interior and appropriators have been arguing since August over whether to fund the move.

Interior said it was given the green light to reallocate \$5 million from last year's bill to put toward the move — something [lawmakers disputed](#).

House and Senate appropriators have since barred the use of funds in next year's bill to go toward the BLM move, a feature the D.C.-area lawmakers hope will remain absent from the spending package.

"We urge you to prohibit the use of funds under any authority to relocate the Bureau of Land Management," they wrote, adding that the move is "designed to harm public lands and limit congressional oversight."

McCollum reiterated her interest in holding back funds for the move.

"We have yet to receive answers from BLM about the reasons for this relocation and what problems it will solve. Our House-passed FY 20 Interior-Environment appropriations bill restricts funding for this move. Going into conferencing negotiations, it's great to have the support of additional lawmakers about this poorly concocted plan," she said in a statement to The Hill.

Appropriators are still in negotiations over a final spending package.

“We are continuing to negotiate on subcommittee allocations, which are a necessary prerequisite to begin conferencing individual appropriations bills,” a House Democratic aide told The Hill. “Unfortunately, Senate Republicans’ demands to fund [President Trump’s](#) wasteful border wall are making the allocations negotiations more difficult.”