

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Idaho State Office
1387 South Vinnell Way
Boise, Idaho 83709-1657

In Reply Refer To:
1750 (912) P

July 21, 2008

EMS Transmission: 07/22/2008
Instruction Memorandum No. ID-2008-056
Expires: 9/30/2009

To: ILT
Attention: Idaho Public Affairs Staff

From: State Director

Subject: Congressional Relations

Program: Office of Communications lead, involving any employee who is likely to interact with members of Congress and/or their staff.

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the following procedures designed to ensure effective processing and handling of congressional inquiries and communications. They are intended to ensure that we speak with one voice on policy and legislative matters, while allowing for the necessary and invaluable communications that occur in the field between local congressional staff and BLM. The procedures address the most frequent instances in which we work with Congress. They should be shared widely with staff, especially with anyone who is likely to interact with congressional offices.

Policy/Action:

1. Providing Factual Information. The BLM routinely responds to many types of information requests from Congress. Most routine inquiries should be handled directly in the field; e.g., a response to routine requests for maps, survey notes, brochures, or requests for factual information. However, if there is a possibility the information is being requested for a future hearing or to develop legislation, ISO Office of Communications should be notified so that they can coordinate with ISO-910 and with WO Legislative Affairs. Copies of information you intend to provide should be given to ISO Office of Communications for coordination and review at the State level. They, in turn, will work with WO Legislative Affairs, before sending the response and/or material to the requesting congressional office. If there are questions as to whether a request should be handled directly or referred to the WO, please contact Cheryle Zwang, Idaho Office of Communications. She will provide coordination between ISO-910, the appropriate staff in the WO Legislative Affairs Group, and your office.

2. Preparing Legislation. In many instances, either members of Congress or the Administration propose legislation which affects the BLM. When BLM participation in such efforts is requested, it must come through WO Legislative Affairs and, when the legislation involves Idaho, they will work through the ISO Office of Communications. If you or your staff are contacted directly, you should contact the ISO Office of Communications and they will refer the request to WO Legislative Affairs so they may coordinate BLM's response. Also, WO Legislative Affairs occasionally drafts legislation, but only with Departmental and, when necessary, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance. The WO Legislative Affairs staff's participation in legislation is sometimes initiated via contact between congressional staff and the field or ISO program staff. When this happens, the ISO Office of Communications must be notified as soon as this type of discussion begins so they can refer the request to WO Legislative Affairs.

Legislative language, concepts, maps, or suggestions **should not** be given directly to congressional offices without clearance from ISO-910 after coordination through the ISO Office of Communications with WO Legislative Affairs. The WO Legislative Affairs staff will ensure proper review within the Department of the Interior and elsewhere, as necessary, and prepare documents for Departmental or Directorate signature. Adherence to these procedures is necessary to ensure that Idaho BLM is not perceived as drafting or taking a position on legislation. Positions on Legislation are defined by BLM headquarters, the Department, or the Administration.

3. Commenting on Legislation. Congressional staff members often ask the BLM for formal or informal comments on a legislative proposal. Sometimes those requests will be sent to field offices or State Offices. The BLM's responses to these requests must go through the Department for approval. The WO Legislative Affairs staff is responsible for coordinating the appropriate review by the Department, and ISO Office of Communications is responsible for coordinating the review for the state. The Department will review the BLM's comments for consistency with Administration policy. If local responses -- including drafts -- are sent directly to Congress or their staff without this review, we can place the BLM and the Administration in an embarrassing position and the effect could be detrimental to our legislative aims and relationships.

4. Hearings and Testimony. Requests to testify at hearings, either in Washington or in the field must be coordinated with WO Legislative Affairs through the ISO Office of Communications. The Department has established procedures with respect to hearings with which BLM must comply. For example, the Department will only testify on legislation that has been introduced, not on draft legislative proposals, and it will not testify with less than one week's notice of a hearing. Therefore, any notification (formal or informal) of a proposed hearing must be shared immediately with WO Legislative Affairs through the ISO Office of Communications so that BLM and the Department can have the maximum amount of time possible to decide if we will testify, who should testify, and to begin testimony preparation and the surname process.

5. Meetings with Members and Staff. The WO Legislative Affairs staff provides assistance in arranging such meetings, including those requested by Congress and staff and those initiated by the Idaho BLM. All meetings in Washington involving Congressional members and/or their staff must be coordinated with WO Legislative Affairs through the ISO Office of Communications.

6. Lobbying Activities. The Department provides guidance concerning what may and may not be done regarding the use of Interior appropriated funds for lobbying activities. This guidance is on the Department's ethics Web site (www.doi.gov/ethics) and should be reviewed by all BLM employees. Questions about whether planned communications to the public would be affected by these lobbying restrictions should be referred to the Field Solicitor.

Timeframe: The direction contained herein is effective immediately.

Background: To ensure effective relations with Congress and compliance with Departmental and Bureau policy and procedure.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: 1750 – Congressional Relations

Coordination: This direction was coordinated with Legislative Affairs (WO), Idaho Deputy State Director for Resources & Science, IDSO Support Services, Office of Communications, and the Idaho Associate State Director.

Contact: Cheryle Zwang, Idaho Office of Communications, (208) 373-4016.

Boise District with Union: Management is reminded to notify and satisfy any bargaining requirements prior to implementation.

Signed Peter J. Ditton
For Thomas H. Dyer

Authenticated
Sylvia V. Graves
Secretary