

Dear Supporter,

This week, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke felt he could speak candidly about his employees among some close friends – a gathering of oil executives. Zinke confided “[I got 30 percent of the crew that’s not loyal to the flag.](#)” Presumably by the “flag” he was referring to himself as a flag officer in the tradition of the Navy, where he spent most of his adult life.



**Big Hat, Pro Cattle.** Zinke claims to be channeling Teddy Roosevelt but his actions are much more reminiscent of Teapot Dome.

Hopefully, he was not questioning their patriotism – but in the sort of political environment where even football players are being called out, you can’t be sure.

Zinke likened himself to a pirate captain who had captured “a prized ship at sea and only the captain and the first mate row over” to take possession. Given that self-view, it is unclear why he thinks as many as 70% of his DOI captives are “loyal to the flag” – unless he believes there has been a Stockholm Syndrome epidemic.

Civil servants are not supposed to be loyal to political appointees. Their [oath](#) – the same one given to our uniformed military – is to defend the Constitution and to “faithfully discharge” their duties.

Like the military, civil servants are expected to follow lawful orders. But loyalty? Loyalty is a commodity earned, not presumed.

Consider Zinke's short record to see if his performance merits respect, let alone loyalty. Look, for just one example, at his utter hypocrisy about empowering the field. For months, Zinke has said he is planning to put more resources on the front lines "and giving them the authority to make decisions."

He has done neither, and in fact, has done the opposite. Besides pushing budget cuts, he has repeatedly intervened to take decision-making out of the hands of his field managers:

- Glacier National Park officials were limiting motorboat access in an attempt to control the spread of invasive zebra mussels. Without a stitch of scientific review, Zinke [ordered them to reverse themselves](#).
- At Zinke's behest, the National Park Service issued a directive forbidding its superintendents from even considering the option of limiting sales of plastic disposable bottles. This despite the fact that NPS found that [bottle bans worked](#).
- And in Alaska, he is moving to [strip refuge managers and park superintendents of the authority to protect their wildlife](#) from "predator control" methods such as denning (shooting bear cubs and wolf pups in their dens).



So when Zinke spouts BS like "Push your generals where the fight is," it is hard to keep a straight face.

Public employees work for the public, not for politicians. The very idea of the civil service was to replace a spoils system where employment was based on political allegiance.

Federal service has its own challenges but is even harder when Cabinet secretaries issue crude threats against their workforces. For these embattled public servants, PEER has their backs –that’s our job. [Let us know if you stand with us.](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeff Ruch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Jeff Ruch

Executive Director

**P.S. Do as I Say, Not as I Do.** In his remarks to his oil industry buddies, Zinke also said “you’ve got to hold people accountable.” But the buck doesn’t go by, let alone stop, with him. Consider his recent report to the White House on shrinking national monuments. Not only was it a [contradictory mish-mash](#), but it was [full of errors](#) and was [not even fact-checked](#).

If Zinke was a high-school student turning in poor quality work like this, he would get a failing grade. Yet, he demands accountability from a quality-control-free zone.

**P.P.S. Scott Pruitt’s Cone of Silence.** The EPA Administrator has ordered a [soundproof phone booth](#) with high-tech sound-dampening and privacy features to be built in his office.

This will enable the [ultra-paranoid Pruitt](#) to plot the planet’s destruction free from disturbance or surveillance.

**P.P.P.S. Least Relevant IG Report in History.** As the U.S. reels from eco-catastrophes, the EPA Office of Inspector General just issued a [report](#) about past problems with retention bonuses – even though EPA is trying to shed workers by the hundreds and we are unlikely see another retention bonus at EPA anytime soon.

The amount that drew the IG's scrutiny was "\$1,605 of irregular payments." Maybe we need a new watchdog at EPA.

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