



September 29, 2015

The Honorable Michael Bennet
U.S. Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet;

Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) respectfully requests your support of S. 2031, the American Soda Ash Competitiveness Act, expected to be heard in the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests And Mining this Thursday. Senators Barrasso and Enzi from Wyoming and Senators Wyden and Merkley from Oregon have introduced this bill adjusting royalty rates on sodium bicarbonate production to allow domestic producers to effectively compete in the world market for sodium bicarbonate products.

This matter is important to Northwest (NW) Colorado because the largest known, naturally occurring commercial deposit of sodium bicarbonate in North America is located in Rio Blanco County here in our region. The producer of this resource, Natural Soda, is one of the world's largest producers of baking soda for the food and beverage, health care, agriculture, industrial, pharmaceutical and specialty markets.

While NW Colorado has experienced significant economic challenges due to federal regulations, court cases and market conditions since the year 2000, Natural Soda has been one entity that has continued to grow economically. Natural Soda has been a stable and growing company in NW Colorado and, if able to compete effectively, will continue to expand into the future. A stable, growing employer in NW Colorado will result in more jobs, community investment and an improvement in the tax base. This is a critical need for communities that have been experiencing a downward spiral in these key areas for a number of years.

As demand increases for sodium bicarbonate products globally, it makes sense to provide opportunities for domestic producers to compete in that market. It is our understanding that increased demand for this resource comes from other countries; domestic demand is stagnant, if not in decline. The pure, organic soda produced by Natural Soda in NW Colorado is highly sought after and ranks highest in quality from the food and pharmaceutical industries globally. Passage of S. 2031 will aid in making this soda a

globally competitive product improving food and pharmaceutical products worldwide as well as providing opportunities for job and investment growth here at home.

A bi-partisan group of Senators are sponsoring this important legislation and we urge you to join that group and support S. 2031 as it goes through the process. Thank you for taking time to consider our comments. Please contact us if you have any questions regarding our comments or support of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Eskelson".

Jeffrey Eskelson, Chairman
Rio Blanco County

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin Chazen".

Martin Chazen, Vice-Chairman
City of Grand Junction