

Testimony – H.R. 1484

November 11, 2016

Approximately eighty seven percent of Nevada is owned and controlled by the Federal Government. H.R. 1484 calls for certain of those federal lands to be transferred to the State of Nevada.

The support in Nevada for transferring the federal lands to the state has been growing for many years and brought on by the difficulty of living in a state where most of the decisions concerning management of the natural resources are made over two thousand miles away by those who the citizens of the state do not get to vote for.

In 2013 the Nevada Legislature passed AB227 which created a task force to study the implications of transferring public lands to the State. The Task Force was made up of one member of the County Commission from each of the seventeen counties in the Nevada and was instructed to meet at least monthly for one year, after which they were to report their findings to the legislature.

At the first meeting of the Task Force I was elected chairman and suggested not voting on anything until we had gathered a lot of information, except for one thing, I said, how many of you think it is a good idea to transfer the public lands to the state. More than half of the members thought it was not a good idea

or were not sure but before we finished our study every member was on board and supporting the transfer.

The Task Force first contracted for an economic analysis by Intertec Services to study the transfer and discovered the State could both afford to make the transition and if it were to manage its own public land could expect a net revenue, at a minimum, of three hundred fifty million dollars a year from doing so.

During the year the Task Force took testimony from a broad array of interests including our state agency people to tell us what it will take to get from where we are to where we have to be to manage our own lands. We had testimony from as many of the stake holders on the public land as we could fit into our schedule, including, the sportsman, the Farm Bureau, and the Sierra Club among many others we heard from. We then had a debate on the legalities of the transfer between the Assistant Attorney General in Utah and a professor from The University of Colorado.

The Task Force members were instructed after every meeting to go back to their county and report on what was agreed upon by the Task Force. They then were to bring the concerns of any in their county who were interested in the issue, back to the Task Force. The idea being this would be a ground up process giving everyone in the state with an interest in the transfer, for or against, an opportunity to be heard.

The Task Force prepared a resolution in support of the transfer which was taken to each of the seventeen counties and approved by them and then submitted to the Legislature. The resolution became "Senate Joint Resolution 1" and was passed by both houses of the legislature and signed by the Governor. SJR1 became H.R. 1484 and introduced by Congressman Mark Amodei.

On the issue of transferring the public lands we discovered there is more among the residents of the state that unites us than divides us. For the sportsmen, environmental community and resource users there is much we can agree on. For instance 1484 calls for the transfer of all valid existing rights and uses. If you can hunt, fish, camp, graze or prospect on the public lands now you will be able to do it after the transfer. In other words anything you can do on the public lands now you will be able to do after the transfer. The difference will be the land will be owned and managed by the state and access will be better protected.

The National Parks, National Monuments, military and Indian lands and some other special designation lands will remain federal and will not be transferred to the state. The transfer will take place in two phases and except for such lands as those already designated for disposal by the federal agencies and other lands with similar designation such as some of the lands on the railroad corridor, the public lands will remain public and cannot be sold.

Use of the public lands in Nevada will be available to everyone in the nation but it will be up to the people of Nevada to be sure the natural resources are protected and used wisely. Generations to come can be assured of the opportunity to hunt, fish, camp, prospect, graze and do all those things on the public lands that have been done in the past as access to those lands in the future is guaranteed.

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