Resolution Supporting
The Transfer of Public Lands To Willing Western States

The federal government controls more than 50% of the lands in the *12 Western States. It controls more than 80% of all lands in Nevada and more than 60% of all lands in AK, ID, and UT. At the same time, the federal government controls less than 5% on average of the lands in Hawaii and all states east of Colorado.

Under increasing federal control over western lands, access is restricted, health of the lands is diminished, and productivity is depressed. Increasing federal control over western lands costs eastern states billions annually in taxes to subsidize western communities to not use their own lands and abundant resources to care for their own children and communities.

The transfer of public lands to local control – those whose lives and livelihood directly depend upon responsive and responsible management of their lands – is about securing Better Access, Better Health, AND Better Productivity for our public lands for the benefit of west and the nation.

For more information, please refer to this Transfer of Public Lands Policy Statement ratified unanimously by state leaders from around the nation as well as the American Lands Council website and this resources page (Resolutions).

If I Don’t Live In A Western State, Why Does It Matter To Me, And My State? That’s a great question.

Access – Access to public lands is vital for proper management, economic activity, and public enjoyment, yet the federal government is actively restricting access routes and prohibiting multiple uses on tens of millions of acres of public land.

Health – Every year, failed federal forest policies send more than six million acres of national forests up in smoke on average, polluting our air and water, killing millions of animals, and placing communities at extreme risk. Proper management reduces wildfire hazard, enhances wildlife habitat, protects watershed, and prevents the spread of devastating pests and disease.

Productivity— Whether it be energy, minerals, timber, agriculture, or tourism and recreation,
public lands offer a vast economic opportunities that, when managed wisely, significantly improve the economy. Under increasing federal control, western county commissioners report that the greatest export from their once vibrant communities is their children.

**Why the Difference? The statehood promises are the same!** The statehood agreements (“Enabling Acts” or “Acts of Admission”) for states east and west of Colorado have the same terms regarding the federal government's duty to dispose of the public lands. However, the federal government has failed to honor these same terms equally with the western states. As the U.S. Supreme Court warned recently “our Nation was and is a union of States, equal in power, dignity and authority. … the constitutional equality of the States is essential to the harmonious operation of the scheme upon which the Republic was organized.” Shelby County v. Holder, 570 U.S. ____ (2013)

Those who argue for increased centralize power and control over western lands, to the detriment of the health and productivity of these lands, rationalize this blatant inequity by ignoring the “stubborn facts.” They claim that because that’s the way it is, that must be the way it always was and always should be. **Nothing could be further from the truth!** Here’s a link to a recent article that addresses this arguments that simply defy basic common sense, let alone the very principles upon which our nation was founded.

**It’s already been done before!** States like IL, IN, MI, IA, MO, AR, LA, AL, MS and FL, etc. were once as much as 90% federally controlled for decades. They couldn’t fund the education of their children, grow their economies, or function as equally sovereign states. They banded together behind U.S. Sen. Thomas Hart Benton (D-MO) and compelled Congress to transfer title to their public lands.

**What Can I Do?** The [South Carolina Legislature](#), [National Association of Counties](#), [American Farm Bureau](#) and many others have passed resolutions supporting the [Transfer of Public Lands](#) to willing western states. Six western states (AZ, ID, MT, NV, UT, WY) have already taken legislative action to initiate the process of compelling Congress to honor the promise to transfer title to their public lands. **We need your help** to assemble a team to pass a similar resolution in your state and present it to your members of Congress urging them to honor for the western states the same statehood terms that Congress already kept with all states east of Colorado, for the benefit of the entire nation.

**Where Can I get More Information?** [www.AmericanLandsCouncil.org](http://www.AmericanLandsCouncil.org) or, contact us directly:

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