



## **Resolution Supporting the Full and Immediate Implementation of the Transfer of Public Lands**

**Issue:** Transfer of public lands

**Adopted Policy:** NACO believes all fifty states are equal and that every state should receive everything that was promised to them in their enabling acts, including land transfers, if requested by an individual state with consultation with the affected counties.

**Background:** At statehood, the federal government promised all states, in their enabling acts, that it would transfer title to the public lands within the newly created states.

The U.S. Supreme Court has called these promises "solemn compacts," "bilateral agreements," and "trusts" that must be performed "in a timely fashion".

States like Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama, and Mississippi were once as much as 90 percent federally controlled for decades. These "Western States" (as they called themselves at the time) succeeded in compelling the federal government to transfer their public lands because they understood the historical duty of the federal government to dispose of the same, and they banded together and refused to be silent or take "No" for an answer because federally controlled public lands prevented them from (i) generating tax revenues to educate their children, (ii) growing their economies, (iii) caring for their lands, and (iv) responsibly utilizing their abundant natural resources.

The current western states are still waiting for the federal government to honor the same promise it made and kept with all states east of Colorado.

Despite the fact that the promise is the same to dispose of the public lands upon being admitted as states, states east of Colorado have less than 5 percent federally controlled lands, while the western states (excluding Hawaii) have more than 50 percent federally controlled lands.

**Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact:** The transfer of federal lands to state ownership will have many positive effects including, responsible development of natural resources, higher paying jobs, a growing tax base, and the ability to generate higher revenue for schools and local government.,

**Adopted | July 22, 2013**