

ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2845, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable NANCY PELOSI, Democratic Leader:

SEPTEMBER 7, 2016.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
*Speaker of the House, United States Capitol,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Section 4(a) of the John F. Kennedy Centennial Commission Act (P.L. 114-215), I am pleased to appoint The Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy III of Massachusetts to the John F. Kennedy Centennial Commission.

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation.

Best regards,

NANCY PELOSI,
Democratic Leader.

□ 1815

FEDERAL LANDS POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, our Natural Resources Committee—and great work from the Natural Resources Committee's staff—has been trying to get a handle on just how much land the United States—the Federal Government—has taken over.

West of the Mississippi, it is absolutely extraordinary. Now, we have heard in recent months and over the last few years of incidents in which landowners, according to the media, just went off and did something crazy, overreacted—maybe had a gun—but it bears looking into what the Federal Government has been doing to the landowners, to the local governments, to the State governments in the Western United States. Our committee has been able to pull together maps that show just how much Federal Government property we have.

On this, we have the Bureau of Indian Affairs showing in these burgundy, or maroon, areas. These are areas in the West that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is in charge of.

When we look at the next map here, added to that of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, we have the Bureau of Land Management. Those are these areas here, the pale color, the soft orange. It is 247.3 million acres. That would be larger than Arizona, plus Iowa, plus Colorado, plus Nevada all put together that is owned by the Bureau of Land

Management—those are all of these kind of light orange areas—all the way up here, into Montana. It is just extraordinary, when you look at Nevada, how much land the State of Nevada and the citizens of Nevada control and how much the Bureau of Land Management controls. Absolutely extraordinary. We run into the same thing here just north of California and getting into Oregon and over into Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming. It is just incredible.

Then the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service gets some of their land in here. Then you also have the United States Forest Service. Those are these green areas. They have got a lot of California, a lot of Oregon, Washington, Idaho. You have got Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, right on down. You have got even Arizona and New Mexico. Extraordinary. That is this light green area. Then you have the national parks.

Oh, by the way, the Forest Service has 197.1 million acres. Twice the size of Montana is what the U.S. Forest Service has. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has 89.1 million acres. That is larger than Utah and North Carolina put together. The national parks have 84 million acres. That is larger than New Mexico and New Hampshire put together. Then there are other agencies. We add on the Department of Energy, the Department of Transportation, the TVA, the Bureau of Reclamation—extraordinary.

When you look at how much land is white—meaning that belongs to State, local, or private owners—and how much is owned by the Federal Government, you begin to think, perhaps, the Soviet Union didn't disappear and that the Soviet Union is now in the Western United States when a government controls that much of what used to be private property, much of it.

We look at the next map, and we are adding on another overlay. With this one, we have the endangered species' critical habitat. That is for 704 species of plants and animals. I know, in my district, we have two plants that grow wild, and they are all over the place. They were notified that they are now listed as threatened, and my local governments are already suffering because of the Federal land, the national forests. They get no tax money. They are not getting revenue. The Federal Government is not producing the renewable resource of timber off of them anymore. Then they get notified that they have got a couple of threatened plants with critical habitats there.

The local government was saying: Wait a minute. These things are everywhere. These plants are all over the place. Look, we have got pictures. They are all over the place. You can find them anywhere.

What does the Federal Government say?

Yes, but we have a scientific study that says they are threatened. We don't care if you have got pictures that show they are everywhere. That is not sci-

entific, because we had somebody in a cubicle in a little office, who never went to those areas, and he says they are threatened, so we are going to say they are threatened. You people who live in that area and who took pictures of them everywhere must not know what you are talking about.

Wilderness areas, we have got 765 wilderness areas on Federal land. That is 109 million acres in 44 States. Then we have the Clean Air Act and Class I areas also added in here.

Then, on our last map here, we have added on the wetlands—110.1 million acres are subject to section 404 regulations of the Clean Water Act—and marine protected areas. There are 13 marine sanctuary areas in more than 170,000 square miles of waters. Then you have got the Outer Continental Shelf at 1.712 billion acres.

We will add this additional map. We have added Wild and Scenic Rivers. There are 12,709 miles of 208 rivers—amazing—that are managed by BLM, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service. Then we have 49 heritage areas in 32 States. It is absolutely extraordinary. When you look at all of the overlays of federally owned controlled land, there is just not much left there.

Now, I love the idea that our chairman, ROB BISHOP, had for a bill. How about if we don't allow the Federal Government to get any more land—to take over any more land—west of the Mississippi until 10 percent of all of the land east of Mississippi is owned by the Federal Government? That might slow things down with the people who are east of the Mississippi starting to have to lose their private property as the Federal Government takes up more and more.

I am pleased to be joined by the gentleman from California. He knows California as well as anybody in the country, certainly better, probably, than the current Governor. I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK).

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I particularly want to thank Congressman GOHMERT for organizing this discussion on Federal lands policy and for his highlighting of the Federal Footprint Map.

You can find that at naturalresources.house.gov/federalfootprint or just Google "Federal Footprint." When you do, you will have a complete picture of how much land the Federal Government owns and how much of your State and your community is affected. It may surprise you.

For example, the Federal Government owns just seven-tenths of 1 percent of the entire State of New York. It owns just 1.1 percent of the State of Illinois. It owns just 1.8 percent of the State of Texas; but then go further west, and you will see the reason for the Western revolt. The Federal Government owns and controls 62 percent of the State of Alaska. It owns and

controls two-thirds of the State of Utah and 81 percent of the State of Nevada. In my home State of California, the Federal Government owns nearly half; 48 percent is Federal land. In one county in my district, Alpine County, the Federal Government owns 93 percent of the land.

If you are not from one of the Western States, you need to understand what that means. That is all land that is completely off the local tax rolls. That is land that carries increasingly severe restrictions on public use and access, which means it is generating very little economic activity to these regions; and, often, Federal ownership means that Federal land use policies are in direct contravention to the wishes of the local communities that are entangled with it.

Recently, the Natural Resources Committee held a field hearing in north Las Vegas at the request of Congressman CRESENT HARDY. Now, if you have ever flown into Las Vegas, you know how vast are the empty and unutilized lands of Nevada, stretching as far as the horizon. Yet the local leaders there all complained of how the region's economy suffers from a great shortage of land—land for homes and shops, for businesses and infrastructure. What an irony and what a commentary about the harm that is being done by the decisions of our Federal land managers.

More than a century ago, we began setting aside the most beautiful lands in the Nation for the “use, resort, and recreation” of the American people. That was the wording of the original Yosemite Land Grant that was signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1864; but somewhere along the way, public “use, resort, and recreation” became “look, but don't touch,” and the Federal Government became indiscriminate and voracious in the amount of land under its direct control.

As I said, my congressional district is in the heart of the Sierra Nevada. Common complaints from my constituents and from local government officials range from abusive Federal regulatory enforcement to inflated fees that have forced families to abandon cabins they have held for generations, exorbitant new fees that are closing down long-established community events, road closures, and the arbitrary denial of grazing permits for family ranchers who go back generations on that land. A small town in my district that is trying to install a \$2 million spillway gate for their reservoir was just given a \$6 million estimate from the Forest Service just to relocate a hiking trail and a handful of campsites.

Let me relate one quick story of what it means to be entangled in this Federal morass that came to me from the sheriff of Plumas County, which is just outside of my district.

An elderly couple goes horseback riding near their home. They come across an old horseshoe. The wife picks it up, and an ambitious, young Forest

Service official saw her pick it up. The next thing they knew, six armed Federal law enforcement officers descended upon their home. They tore it apart and, ultimately, prosecuted this elderly couple for removing the horseshoe, charging them criminally with stealing from the Federal Government. Ultimately, the Federal judge dismissed the charges and chastised the officials who were responsible for this travesty, but only after this couple had gone through hell.

Ask yourself how your local economy would fare if the Federal Government owned 93 percent of the land in your county, forbade or greatly restricted any economic activity on it, and ignored the pleas of your local city council or county board.

□ 1830

In my district, the Federal Government consigned our forests to a policy of benign neglect. We now have, roughly, four times more trees per acre than the land can support. In this overcrowded and stressed condition, the trees can no longer resist the drought and beetle infestation. Today, an estimated 85 percent of the pine trees in the Sierra National Forest—that is adjacent to Yosemite National Park—are dead. And I am talking about Christmas-tree-in-July dead just waiting to be consumed by catastrophic fire.

The National Park Service estimates it is facing more than \$12 billion of maintenance backlog, yet we keep adding to the Federal holdings that we can't take care of now. That is why the Federal footprint map is so important to understand and why fundamental reform of our land use policy is of paramount importance.

Now, the Federal Lands Subcommittee has three principal goals: to restore public access to the public lands, to restore sound management to the public lands, and to restore the Federal Government as a good neighbor to those communities most impacted by the Federal lands. But overarching all of these imperatives is the simple fact that excessive Federal land ownership in the West has become a stultifying drag on our economies and a direct impediment to our ability to take good care of our public lands.

I thought Congressman GOHMERT put it best in a subcommittee hearing we held almost 2 years ago now when he compared the Federal Government's land use policies to the old miser whose great mansion has become the town eyesore—overgrown with weeds, paint peeling, roof dilapidated, broken windows—while the old miser spends all of his time and money plotting how he can buy his neighbor's land.

There needs to be a proper balance between Federal ownership, State and local stewardship, and the productive private ownership of the lands. One look at the Federal footprint map should warn even the most casual observers that we have lost that balance and that we need to restore it.

I, again, thank the gentleman from Texas for organizing this time today and for yielding time.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) so much for his in-depth observations.

I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE), who knows a great deal about this situation.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas. Again, I appreciate the comments of the gentleman from California.

I am sure most of you have seen this chart, but the color red designates the Federal ownership of land. So you can see some of the statistics that were quoted by the gentleman from California that, in the Eastern part of the U.S.—and it begins at New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana—is where the great mass of Federal lands come into play. You might ask why?

These are the States that came in after Teddy Roosevelt was President. So in the early 1900s, he began the policy of holding many of the lands that were supposed to be given back to the States. He wanted the large national parks that we were many times enamored with, the large national forests. But they go beyond that. And that going beyond, that holding of land that has productive use but will not be used productively by the government, is the great source of economic problems in the West.

Now, in New Mexico, which is the State here, we have many national forests in the areas covered with red. At one point, New Mexico had 123 mills that were processing timber that were cut out of our national forests. So 20 or 30 years ago, the Fish and Wildlife Service said that we have to protect the spotted owl and logging is the problem. They killed 85 percent of the timber industry nationwide. They killed those jobs nationwide.

In New Mexico, of the 123 mills that we had processing timber at one point, we have closed 122 of them. So imagine these rural communities up in the mountains of a sparsely populated State, they have no economic basis now that the Forest Service has shut these mills down. By the way, about 3 years ago, they came out with a finding that logging was never the problem.

So economic devastation occurred in the areas where the national forest had stopped all logging for a lie that had come from the Fish and Wildlife Service. So people in the West are understandably irritated, they are angry, and they are mad because their way of life has disappeared in these logging communities. But it goes much further beyond that.

A couple of years ago, the Forest Service took a look at the grazing allotments in one of the forests and said: “Oh, we have got to eliminate you 17 ranchers.”

We asked later if they would show us the science which said they have to get

the people off. They showed me a picture of an orange, 5-gallon can turned upside-down in the forest and said: "Look, the grass height is not high enough."

I began to ridicule their orange-bucket science in public. It embarrassed them tremendously. Meanwhile, we asked the scientists at New Mexico State University to come and study the grazing and the height of the grass, and they said it is probably at historic heights.

So we got involved in the issue. All the ranchers were eventually reinstated into their allotments, but these are private property rights. The allotments are things that have been purchased and sometimes passed along from generation to generation.

Those private property rights, constitutional rights, were removed with no reason, with no understanding of what they are doing from a Forest Service that was arrogant with its power.

Again, you see the effect on our economy. New Mexico is one of the lowest economies in the U.S.'s 50 States. So to find the U.S. Government at odds with the jobs in the State in this rural area just does not make sense to most people. So you find this budding anger across the entire West because the same policies affect everyone out there.

Right now, we have a situation where one family has been fighting the U.S. Forest Service for their water rights. The court said the water rights belong to them. The Forest Service responded by putting a fence around the 23 acres. And they said: "Well, it may be his water, but it is our 23 acres surrounding the water."

The rancher went back to the courts. The courts said, over a period of time, he does not have a right to walk his cows on their 23 acres, but he does have the right to move the water from the 23 acres to his cows. The Forest Service responded by electrifying the fence.

Now, our office has been engaged for 12 years trying to get some reasonable understandings between the rancher and the Forest Service, but it, again, is this arrogance that is willing to drive one of the largest ranchers in that area out of business over something that is, to most people, not understandable.

We continue to analyze the effect, again, of these big red areas in our States. And at the end of the day, the most pressure is put on the Western schools. Now, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) has done a magnificent study showing that the schools in these States are 20 percent below in funding all of the States in the rest of the country.

So at the end of the day, the problem beyond the tax base, the problem beyond the jobs, the problem is in our schools that are starved for resources because we have no tax base on which to fund the schools and which to fund the local governments. So as you look at these footprints of the Federal Gov-

ernment ownership in the West, understand the trauma that it brings to us in our schools, in our jobs, and in our way of life.

It is time for the U.S. Government to change its policies. It is time for the U.S. Government to begin to deal with the fact that people need to raise families in rural States, they need the access to good schools, and we need to be able to access the land which they are currently curtailing at an amazing rate. So that is the perspective from New Mexico on the ownership of Federal lands.

Again, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for his leadership on this issue. I thank him for the time that he has yielded to us on this particular subject matter. I would, again, state that we can do better and we must do better.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE).

So often we hear from people here on this floor from the other side of the aisle talking about how much they care about the children, for the children, for the children. And I know, in my district, we have counties that have national forests. There is no tax base, as Mr. PEARCE points out.

You can't tax it when they are not producing the renewable resource of timber. These aren't sequoias. These are not redwoods. These are just pine trees that grow back every 15 or 20 years or so. And the schools are hurting, the local governments are hurting, but the children suffer because of the Federal Government's usurping the land, failing to utilize it, and leaving people high and dry.

We had a hearing. I learned a lot, and I was pleased that my friend, Mr. HARDY, had requested the hearing because I learned a lot.

I yield to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HARDY).

Mr. HARDY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from the great State of Texas for yielding me the time.

Nowhere are the challenges of the Federal land mismanagement more evident than in Nevada, where more than 85 percent of our State is controlled by the Federal Government. Land management is an issue that affects all Nevadans, both urban and rural. That is why I was proud to have the opportunity to hold a Natural Resources Committee field hearing in my district examining the unique challenges facing southern Nevada communities.

At the hearing, we heard from local agencies, a nonprofit organization, a university professor, a private sector trade association, and the Federal Government. By bringing all of these different stakeholders to the table at once, one thing became abundantly clear: the status quo Federal land management isn't working, and we need to do something about it. If we fail to act, we will not only harm the quality of life for our constituents, but we will also be endangering the public safety.

I would like to highlight a few examples that were raised at this field hearing and expose the stark reality.

First, we had a chief engineer for the Clark County Regional Flood Control District testify that erroneous BLM requirements prevent the county officials from removing excess sediment and debris from detention basins after desert flash floods. It is amazing that you would have to ask the Federal Government to return to clean out debris where you have already done EISes and NEPA reports; that you can't go remove it before the next flood comes.

Anybody that knows the desert southwest knows that we don't get much rain, but when we get it, we get it all at once. In our area, we can have 3½ inches of annual rainfall, but it can all come in a couple of floods. And if we don't get those detention basins cleaned, we have the stark reality of shirking the responsibility of local governments and the county governments by protecting for the life, safety, and health of the citizens that are the taxpayers.

He also stated that these aggressively lengthy and convoluted Federal processes poses a significant public safety issue in the event of future floods.

Next we heard from a board member of the Opportunity Village, a community organization that serves thousands of people with intellectual disabilities. She emphasized the need of making affordable land available for important public purposes, including those carried out by qualified nonprofit organizations. According to her testimony, the fundraising dollars of charitable community organizations would be better off spent applied directly to their mission and the people they serve instead of going into the coffers of the Federal bureaucracy. Unfortunately, these charities are forced to expend their limited dollars to acquire the land from the Federal Government.

So you see that the current Federal land management is preventing communities like ours in southern Nevada from carrying out some of their most important responsibilities, like public safety and helping individuals with disabilities.

Those of us on the committee, including my colleague from Texas, firmly believe that there is a better way forward to protect our public lands and natural heritage while allowing the communities to thrive. If we want to grow and diversify our economy to support a growing and diverse population in Nevada, we cannot afford to stand still. As Nevada continues to change, so, too, must our land management.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for leading this important conversation on the Federal footprint out West.

□ 1845

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Nevada. It was quite a learning experience, and it was

amazing to hear testimony about the Federal Government not only not being helpful when ditches needed to be cleaned out to prevent massive flooding problems, but actually being a bigger problem than the floods themselves.

At this time, I yield to the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Mrs. LUMMIS), my dear friend, who is going to be severely missed come next year.

Mrs. LUMMIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas. Texas is a State that has very little Federal land. And the fact that he took the reins as subcommittee chairman for the Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and has taken such an active interest in this issue is something for which those of us from the public lands States in the West are very grateful. Thank you very much, Mr. GOHMERT.

Now, what does this mean on the ground? What we have told you tonight is roughly 640 million acres of this country, or about 30 percent—1 in 3 acres in this country—are owned by the Federal Government. So we have gotten that far.

We have also told you that there are a variety of Federal agencies that own this land. The biggest one is the Bureau of Land Management, BLM, which is under the umbrella of the Department of the Interior. The BLM manages about 250 million acres, and 99.9 percent of that BLM land is in the 11 Western States and Alaska.

So this is an agency that really doesn't deal with 38 of the States. It only deals with 12. But those States are so dramatically affected by this agency, if you combine those 250 million acres, roughly, that BLM manages, that is like the States of Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, and Iowa combined. It is a huge geographic area.

It is not taxed. It is off the property tax rolls. So that is why our schools and other public services in our 11 Western States and Alaska are so impacted by the presence of BLM land. We are given payments in lieu of taxes, but they are not the equivalent of getting taxes, and they are certainly not something that we can count on every year. Some years Congress gives PILT money and some years it does not, so it is not a reliable source of revenue for these States. Yet they are tremendously impacted by these lands.

The science has changed so much, but our statutory scheme in managing these lands has not caught up to the better science that we have today. For example, let's look at this picture. I hope you can see it from where you are sitting. Some of the brownish areas are land that has not been logged. The trees are clogged close together. They have small diameters. They are competing for moisture, for root space, for the nutrients in the soil. Because they are so crowded together, they become less healthy. Bark beetles and other forest killers are killing them out. So what you are seeing here in the

crammed areas is unhealthy forests that have not been logged.

Now, what you are seeing in these green, beautiful areas has been logged. So what has happened there? There has been selective logging. It has been done with the natural contours of the landscape. It has been done in the high ground, so you can keep some high mountain meadows that help keep snow and a source of grass growing below the tree canopy for wildlife, hopefully keeping them in the high country longer in the year. Furthermore, those trees can breathe; they are better resistant to disease; they are healthier and better resistant to fires.

One of the big consequences of having overcrowded, unhealthy, unlogged forests is these massive wildfires that we have been having these last few years. That is bad public policy that was probably generated by people who were well intentioned, who thought that we were overlogging, so their viewpoint was to quit logging, when, in fact, that made matters worse. Instead of quitting logging, we should have been more selective and more careful using silviculture techniques and horticulture techniques that have been proven in the 21st century.

Let's look at grazing, which is a more common use of BLM land. What we have found—and I strongly encourage you to go listen to this TED Talk. If you have ever listened to a TED Talk, this is one of the best ones I have ever heard by a man named Allan Savory. So get on TED Talks, go to Allan Savory, and you will finally understand what I have been saying here for 8 years about 21st century grazing practices.

As it happens, Allan Savory, who is probably the preeminent global expert on grazing, has his ranch in Zimbabwe, and the areas that he was working in Zimbabwe were horribly, horribly eroded. They attributed it to overgrazing. They were worried that there were too many elephants, so they did a massive killing off of thousands of elephants, only to find out that was not the cause.

When they changed their grazing practices and put four times as many split-hoofed animals, meaning cattle or sheep or goats, on that land and herded them, it actually made the grass healthier. Grass grew back in stronger stands of grass. They sequester more carbon, so it is good for carbon capture and sequestration, and the grass stands were healthier. Eroded draws healed up; the grasses came back.

These practices were brought to the United States. Interestingly, my family purchased some land on the ranch next door to us that had a Savory grazing system on it. It had 2,600 acres that were divided into 16 smaller pastures, with the water source in the middle, and we would move our cattle among these 16 small cells; and you would put all of them in one cell for a very short period of time, maybe 10 days, and they would graze that grass down to the nubs.

They would eat the grass that was more palatable, but they would also eat the noxious weeds, and then you move them. So you continue to move them among these 16 cells on 2,600 acres. As we grazed that way, we found out that healthy stands of grass, palatable grass, good buffalo grass, short grass, prairie grasses were thriving. The noxious weeds were declining. The eroded draws were healing. There was more opportunity to sequester carbon.

When you concentrate cattle into those small areas, their manure becomes a tremendously valuable source of fertilizer. The grass stand is healthier. This process was proven in Africa in grazing, and it is being done successfully all over the United States. Please go to the Allan Savory TED Talk. You will understand what I am saying. What he shows on that TED Talk, I have experienced on my own land.

We should be doing that on BLM land. We have BLM land that is overgrazed, and some people come here to Congress and say, well, if you would just take cattle and sheep off the public lands, it is just being overgrazed, then we can have as many wild horses as we want. The problem with that is, wild horses have a solid hoof, so when they pound the ground with their solid hoof, they are compacting the soil. When it rains, it runs off instead of seeping into the soil.

If you put cattle, goats, sheep, elk, deer, moose that have split hooves on that ground, they actually knead the soil with their hoof action, and it develops an opportunity for more of that rain to seep into the ground. It is a better grazing ungulate. We have learned all this recently. This is not 21st century science. This is late 20th century and now 21st century science.

The problem is our statutes were passed in the 1970s when the thought was we should concentrate power and authority and public input into Washington, and we should make these grazing policies and forestry policies out of Washington because the people in the States can't be trusted. They will overlog, and they will overgraze to line their pockets. You know, it is just not true anymore, but our statutes are stuck in a 1970s command-and-control scheme.

So we need to update our statutes to reflect our greater understanding of logging and grazing and how mankind can actually benefit and sustain these resources and improve these resources well into the 21st century. We owe it to our children and grandchildren.

I thank Mr. GOHMERT so much.

Mr. GOHMERT. I thank my friend from Wyoming. Well-made points. When you look at Wyoming on the map and you see just how much of it is colored, meaning how much is controlled by the Federal Government, how much is owned by the Federal Government—I think about the movie where one lawyer got upset because the judge kept interrupting, and the lawyer ultimately says: Well, Judge, if you are

going to try my case, just don't lose it for me.

I think about that with regard to the Federal Government taking over all of this land. If you are going to take over our land, Federal Government, at least just don't ruin it, which has been going on. In fact, what we have seen with the fund that has been used by the Department of the Interior to acquire more and more land, I think we may be \$9-, \$10 billion behind in upkeep and maintenance of our national parks. Our Federal properties as facilities are declining. Where they are not getting proper repair, it is like, as Mr. MCCLINTOCK mentioned, all they can see is, wow, we have got money, let's get more land and more land and more land, and they are not properly taking care of what they have.

At this time, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA). He knows all about the problems the Federal Government continues to create and aggravate.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague, Mr. GOHMERT, once again for yielding to me on so many of these important topics that we have worked on together during my relatively short time here.

This, of course, is very key to all of us in the West, and the reality of which needs to be pressed upon all the people of the country and all of our legislative colleagues across the country, especially on the East Coast that really can't quite fathom how far-reaching this is in Western States. So it is really a pleasure to be able to join with my other Western colleagues and Mr. GOHMERT who have spoken here tonight.

We need to raise the awareness of yet another new map being released by the Committee on Natural Resources. Now, the map I am illustrating here, this actually breaks it down into a smaller size. This is the First Congressional District of California, this being Oregon up top and Nevada on the side, where you have that top corner there, which is part of a State that is owned approximately 45 percent by the Federal Government—actually, not by the Federal Government. It belongs to the people. It is the public's land. Our neighboring State, Nevada, is approximately 84 percent Federal land.

We know how poorly they are managed as we watch them go up in flames each summer. The visible result is that millions of acres in the West burn each year. The amount of timber and fuel reduction is done. You see most of that is done on private lands where they can actually go out and have the incentive to take care of their assets versus the other side, with U.S. Forest Service and BLM and others that don't seem to be able to get out of their own tracks on the issue.

For example, last year, 576,000 acres of Federal land burned in California—this is the public's land—about 1.3 percent of all Federal land in the State. Even worse, fires which began on national forest lands burned hundreds of

thousands of acres of private and State land as well where, as part of the strategy, the Federal Government was even resorting to a backfire-setting strategy on private lands, as they are doing right now to let it burn its way out. This happened partly up in my district in Siskiyou County right now, thousands of acres of private land backfired.

We know that the Forest Service and National Park Service alone have a deferred maintenance backlog, by their own estimate, of over \$16 billion—\$16 billion that would have to come from the national Treasury. Yet both agencies are continually attempting to acquire even more land.

□ 1900

The result, of course, is that these agencies' funds are stretched more and more thinly, making the backlog even worse. At the same time, they are also complaining that, with the increased amount of fire suppression, the costs have shifted for the Forest Service from one-third of the budget just a few years ago to, now, two-thirds of their entire budget for fire suppression, making it harder for the things they should be doing, with getting out harvest permits and doing their other green work during the nonfire season. That doesn't happen anymore.

Another impact of Federal land acquisition is to deny the local governments the property tax revenue they would receive and generate and deny the rural communities the jobs and economic activity that responsible timber, ranching, farming, and mining operations would generate.

Thanks to Federal land acquisition and this administration's refusal to properly manage national forests, rural communities are heavily reliant on the secure rural schools fund, a program the Federal Government funds to help local schools, police, and local infrastructure, to the tune of about \$285 million last year. Counties are also heavily reliant on the PILT fund—payment in lieu of taxes—to the tune of about \$450 million last year.

In both cases, local governments have less funding than if they were simply allowed to have the functioning economies that Federal regulations have destroyed. Both of these funds are something we have to fight for each budget year to make sure they stay in place, because people seem to forget these are backfills for what has been taken away from rural communities and rural economies.

These rural economies don't want handouts. They want to have the opportunity to be self-sufficient, while not having to come begging for PILT funds or the secure rural schools fund. This means jobs for these economies, for these local areas, versus high unemployment and the social ills that come from an economy that has now disappeared, the social ills that affect families and affect homes, that affect local government and what you have

now with the issues of people who are now basically in depression. More domestic violence happens because they don't have a job anymore.

However, the Federal footprint isn't limited solely to federally owned land. The map identifies not just land owned by the Federal Government, but also areas with restrictions on human activities due to Federal regulations.

As you can see, between national forests and other Federal public lands and areas under critical habitat, wetland, or other restrictions, economic activity is restricted in the vast majority of my district. These colors in green and orange are pretty much dominated by Federal land ownership or, supposedly, stewardship. The areas in white are where the offers are still for people in private areas to carry out economic activity.

You can see from the color of that map that there are not a whole lot of options left. Indeed, by the time they establish wildlife corridors and more and more of these things that are in the plans, you can see our options are going to be just about zero.

This means that local voices, once again, are ignored. Communities have little recourse when Federal agencies arbitrarily decide to close roads, limit economic activities like hunting, fishing, hiking, what have you, and expand their reach through regulations and habitat designations.

Rural Sierra Nevada communities have long been told by environmentalists that they must shift to a tourism economy now that Federal and State restrictions have nearly killed the timber and mining industries in those areas. But what happens when the same environmental agenda, extended in the form of critical habitat and other designations, even damages the fledgling tourist economy that they want to promote for these communities?

The Fish and Wildlife Service recently bent to the demands of extremist groups and listed the Sierra Nevada yellow-legged frog and the Yosemite toad under the Endangered Species Act, affecting much of this area on the east side in my district and extending down into Mr. MCCLINTOCK's district south of mine there.

During this process, my colleagues heard from many people in the several public meetings that Mr. MCCLINTOCK and I had on this very subject a couple of years ago. We wanted the public to be able to be part of this process to ensure that the Service heard the concerns of our constituents directly.

The Service's initial habitat maps were riddled with obvious errors, like the inclusion of parking lots and other areas which contained zero amphibian habitat; and over 20,000 public comments were submitted, which were overwhelmingly opposed to the designation of this so-called critical habitat.

However, when the final designations were released just a few days ago, they

differed little from the initial maps. Nearly 2 million acres of Sierra Nevada, all down the east side of California—about half within my district, the other half pretty much all within Mr. MCCLINTOCK's district—were designated as critical habitat.

Again, throughout this process, the Fish and Wildlife Service claimed there would be no negative impacts to Sierra communities. We learned that claim to be false almost immediately.

For years, a race called the Lost Sierra Endurance Run, a 50-kilometer, has been held on existing trails and roads throughout the town of Graeagle in Plumas County, California. Run by a local small local nonprofit, the race generates thousands of dollars for trail maintenance and has a significant economic impact on a little town know as Graeagle, with local hotels, restaurants, and shops benefiting from the visitors the race draws to the area, as well as people being able to enjoy the outdoors and see what their public lands are all about.

However, last year, before the critical habitat designation was even complete, the nonprofit was told they would need to pay to conduct a study on the impacts of the race on the yellow-legged frog—an impact study. Federal agencies were concerned that runners using existing trails might negatively impact the frogs.

The study the Federal agencies demanded was costly enough to more than wipe out any proceeds from the race, and the organizers were forced to cancel it. Not only would runners not be visiting the area, but now, trail conditions will deteriorate without the funding the race generated. Yes, the funding that the race generated was there to help keep the habit and the trails maintained.

This is the second year that the race has not occurred, and it is likely that it, with the visitors it brought to the area, is gone permanently. What is next? Limits on walking through the area within a critical habitat?

Colleagues, it may sound absurd, but Federal agencies have already expressed concern that running within this designation could harm frogs. Imagine all the other activities—using off-road vehicles, hunting, fishing, camping, bird watching, hiking—that agencies likely view as dangerous to frogs.

As we watch the West burn this time of year, we observe the failure of Federal ownership and nonmanagement of the public's lands.

Compare private timberlands versus the public. Private is fire-resistant and healthy, by and large, where they are able to manage their own lands. You can fly over it and see the checkerboard pattern of public versus private. Before a fire, you see it being managed. After a fire, you see the private lands, where they go back out there and get the lands re-covered and replanted again. Public land sits there with a bunch of snags, dead timber, brush

growing up, and becomes the next tinderbox in 5 or 7 years.

Indeed, the damage from these massive fires we have these days, these catastrophic fires, isn't just to the trees. It is to the habitat, to the wildlife—the very habitat they are fighting against us on.

When you have these devastating fires, the next winter, what do you get? Ash and silt all washing down into the creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes, making it bad for the fish. You don't have the habitat there for owls or anything else that used to be there when the forest was still standing. Somehow, there are a handful of extremists that think this is somehow good. Oh, we need these burned lands.

California is full, at this point, with about 66 million dead trees, by the U.S. Forest Service's own estimates. This isn't just an isolated tree here and there. Now you can see entire groves that are just waiting for the next lightning strike or the next spark, and it is going to be big-time problems for those areas to try and put them out.

The Forest Service even goes so far as to resist the opportunity for doing land swaps with land that has already been managed, thinned, properly left by private concerns. Where they can then move on to take some trails into public ownership, that would be beneficial for the public as well as private entities being able to manage the formerly public land. They resist these kind of swaps because they want to buy more, acquire more, with money we don't have.

Each new national monument, wilderness, critical habitat designation, or study area limits the tools to promote healthy forests. With the desire and even mandate for new renewable electricity—especially the mandates in California—forest biomass is one of the greatest opportunity potentials we have. It is something we need to be doing yesterday, in order to generate the electricity and bring the jobs that would come from removing that extra material in a way that is good for the ecology, for the forest, and bring those jobs right in the district—not building solar cells in China or wind machines in Europe, but jobs right in our own backyard; thinning these forests, using the material and putting it into a power plant that can generate renewable electricity to meet the mandate of 50 percent California sees and that other States will probably start adopting. We can be putting these jobs back home, improving forest safety and fire safety, preserving the habitat, keeping the water quality up, and, yes, bringing the jobs home for those paper and wood products that we still all need.

Instead, we watch them burn because they are unwilling to do what needs to be done. They are afraid to do what needs to be done. There is not enough money in the U.S. Treasury to go out and try to recover all that habitat, plant those forests back, which is what the private sector could be doing when

it manages it and is allowed to make a little bit of living at a time.

So we have got a lot of work to do in getting this message across on the way the West is dominated by poor management at the Federal level. I hope those people listening tonight will take this to heart and give us the backing we need to accomplish better policy goals and make it so that our Western lands, our Western economies, our Western habitats can actually be preserved with wise management, not this debacle we see happening every fire season.

So, again, to my colleague, Mr. GOHMERT, I thank him so much for having this time here tonight for us to be able to spotlight this once again for our American people and for our colleagues. I appreciate it.

Mr. GOHMERT. I am grateful to Mr. LAMALFA, a man that has been educated in agriculture. He knows what it is to be a farmer. He knows what it is to be a good steward of the land.

At this point, we have someone else who knows something about use of the land. He is a dentist but knows about use of the land.

I yield to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GOSAR).

Mr. GOSAR. I would like to thank my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Texas, for taking the time to lead on this important conversation about the size of the U.S. Federal footprint.

It is a conversation that many Americans, specifically those living east of the Mississippi River, have never had to think much about. However, in Western States like my home State of Arizona, we face unfair burdens on our communities due to the fact that over 90 percent of all Federal land is located in the West. In Arizona, only 18 percent of the land remaining in the State is privately held.

Where land is locked up by the Federal Government, the government controls all aspects of use, development, and access. Local school districts and businesses suffer, having no private land base to grow or tax to support infrastructure.

Imagine the impact on corn if only 18 percent of the land in Iowa was privately held, or cotton production in Mississippi or oranges grown in Florida. The agriculture that defines many Eastern States would be severely limited if they faced the same Federal footprint that Arizona and Western farmers must confront.

Farmers and ranchers in the West face a tsunami of bureaucracy preventing them from doing their jobs. Additionally, energy development, including traditional and renewable energy, is almost nonexistent on Federal lands.

I have held numerous townhall meetings and field hearings to hear from small-business owners, sportsmen, farmers, ranchers, elected officials, and many other stakeholders who adamantly oppose furthering the reach and size of the Federal Government's footprint.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that the Federal Government management agencies like the BLM have identified hundreds of thousands of acres of Federal land for disposal that the agency admits it is not effectively and efficiently utilizing.

Imagine for a moment that the BLM knows it has land that it doesn't use and yet the Federal Government still keeps the land for itself. The BLM is not alone though. In April of this year, it was reported that the National Park Service has a nearly \$12 million deferred maintenance backlog. Wow.

The Forest Service Federal footprint is 192.9 million acres, and the total Federal estate exceeds more than 635 million acres.

When businesses and the private sector don't develop their leases quickly enough for the extremist environmental groups, they are labeled as "greedy." Yet these same groups give the Federal Government a pass and actually encourage them to acquire more land. The Federal Government is supposed to represent we the people, not the special interest groups like the Sierra Club.

In order to return Federal land that is not being used back to the State and communities who desperately need it, I am proud to have introduced a commonsense solution that ensures public lands are utilized more efficiently, while also yielding significant benefits for stakeholders.

This legislation, known as the HEARD Act, establishes an orderly process for the sale, conveyance, and exchange of Federal lands not being utilized by public land management agencies that have been identified for disposal.

The HEARD Act will yield significant benefits for education, sportsmen, agriculture and natural resource users, counties and States by establishing a revenue-sharing mechanism that ensures a fair return for all.

□ 1915

Now the Heard Act is modeled after the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act. This Federal law, enacted in 1998, has a proven track record of success in Nevada. To date, more than 35,000 acres identified by the BLM for disposal have been sold, conveyed, or exchanged in Nevada, and sales have generated nearly \$3 billion in revenue.

The revenue-sharing mechanism instituted by this law has benefited education, enhanced recreational opportunities, public access, and achieved better overall management of public lands. Imagine what we could do if we returned public lands that were up for disposal back to the public and back to the State.

It is long past time that Congress takes action to responsibly shrink our 635-million acre Federal footprint and empower western States to have a voice in determining our land management policies.

I thank the gentleman from Texas for giving me the time to talk about this.

Mr. GOHMERT. I thank the gentleman from Arizona. I yield back the balance of my time.

STATEHOOD FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JODY B. HICE of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for 30 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this time on the House floor this evening because there has been a historic development in the District of Columbia. Today, a new group called Statehood Yes announced what amounts to bipartisan support for D.C. statehood.

The fact is that the Republican Party of the District of Columbia had not always—in fact, had not been officially a part of the statehood movement, which is not to say that some Republicans have not been for D.C. statehood.

But today was very different. Today, a D.C. resident, George Vradenburg, a philanthropist in our city, a long-term resident, and a former AOL executive, announced that he was chairing a campaign that is part of the effort of the District of Columbia to achieve statehood. That effort is being led by the Mayor and the City Council who, earlier this year, launched what is called the Tennessee Plan.

The Tennessee Plan is simply a shorthand way to get statehood. The way in which my statehood bill operates is that, yes, the House and the Senate would vote for statehood, and it would then ask the city to submit a constitution and do what is necessary to become a State.

The Tennessee plan simply reverses that process. It does what Tennessee did. What Tennessee did was what the District is in the process of doing. What Tennessee did was to present a constitution to the people to be ratified. And when it had done all of the preliminaries, preliminaries that are often done after the statehood vote, they simply came to the Congress and said: Approve us for admission to the State. And, indeed, that is exactly what the Congress did 200 years ago.

The District is trying to imitate that approach to statehood. In order to do so, there needs to be a vote. You are not going to get statehood if you don't want it. So as part of the democratic process, the District would have to vote on whether or not it wants statehood. That is what the Statehood Yes campaign is trying to facilitate as part of what is required by the Tennessee plan.

What this means is—much like the State of Tennessee, it was a Federal territory at the time—this bill would be submitted to the President after the House and the Senate had voted for D.C. statehood if the voters answered four questions.

What are these questions?

First, the voters will have to answer yes or no whether the District should become a State.

Second, the District will have to answer whether voters, those of us who live in the District and vote in the District, approve of a constitution. That constitution is being adopted as I speak by the Council of the District of Columbia.

Third, the voters will have to approve the proposed boundaries for the State. That is important since the Federal sector would continue to exist. That Federal sector would be the areas where The Mall and monuments and other Federal buildings are now located. The new State would be the neighborhoods of the District of Columbia.

And the fourth question the voters will be asked to approve is whether they pledge to support an elected representative form of government.

I was very pleased to hear Mr. Vradenburg speak today at Busboys and Poets, one of our local meeting places, about why he supports D.C. statehood and why he has taken on this effort to be the chairman. Among the things he discussed, of course, is how he intends, with the effort of Statehood Yes, to reach out to all parts of the country.

The District recognizes that, in spite of this bipartisan support in the District of Columbia, statehood remains an uphill climb.

What important change in our country has not been an uphill climb?

We are undaunted by that prospect.

We recognize that the Republican Party nationally has certainly not been supportive of D.C. statehood. At its convention this year, the Republicans did not include language supporting D.C. statehood. In fact, there was language that appeared to oppose D.C. statehood.

But at that time we did not have what we apparently have today, and that is the official support of the Republican Party of the District of Columbia. That official support could not be more important. Present at the Statehood Yes announcement today was Patrick Mara, the Executive Director of the Republican Party of the District of Columbia.

This bipartisanship is minimally necessary for us to move forward; just as we recognize we will have to work with Republicans here in the Congress in order to get the same rights they have.

District of Columbia residents are number one per capita, first in taxes paid to support the government of the United States, and yet, the City's budget comes here every year. It is a local budget. That is money, \$4 billion, raised in the District of Columbia. I am sure my colleagues would tear their hair out, Republican and Democrat, if their local budget had to come here.

The reason the District has moved to statehood is that there is no other way to achieve equality as American citizens except as a new State.