



Your Calls and Letters Made a Difference!

Senator Lee Withdraws Public Land Sales from Budget Reconciliation Bill

Great news! BCHA members who called, emailed or sent letters to their representatives in Congress helped stop a proposal for large-scale transfer of federal public land. The proposal included the largest amount of public lands ever proposed for sale in the modern era.

Recall that as recently as mid-June, 2025, BCHA informed membership that Senator Mike Lee, who chairs the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, proposed up to 2 to 3 million acres of federal public land be sold to states, local governments or private enterprises. His original proposal applied to both U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land

Management (BLM) lands in all western states except Montana. His stated intent was to offset some of the costs associated with continuing tax cuts that were first enacted in 2017 while making land available for affordable housing.

Senator Lee drafted the measure shortly after the House of Representatives removed a smaller but similar provision from its version of the budget reconciliation bill. That amendment would have permitted the sale of public lands in four Nevada counties and one in Utah, including lands that contained thousands of miles of publicly-accessible trails.

Fortunately, the Senate parliamentarian ruled Senator Lee's proposal did not meet the requirements of the reconciliation bill. Senator Lee quickly announced he would revise his plan to restrict sales to lands within five miles of a population center and to sell only BLM land, excluding Forest Service land that he had included in the initial draft. This was still a bridge too far.

Supporters of "keeping public lands in public hands," including BCHA and many others, continued to raise the alarm. We recognized that nothing in Senator Lee's proposal would ensure that public lands sold would be made available for affordable housing. It was also clear that any entity—be they corporations or entities outside of the United States—might be eligible to bid on public lands.

Thankfully, after hearing from constituents like you, a number of US senators stated publicly that they would not support federal land sales. This caused Senator Lee to withdraw his proposal on June 28th. Shortly after which, the budget reconciliation bill moved forward. He was [quoted](#) by a Fox news affiliate in Utah as stating:

"I was unable to secure clear, enforceable safeguards to guarantee that these lands would be sold only to American families—not to China, not to BlackRock, and not to any foreign interests."

BCHA offers thanks to our many members who took action by contacting their representatives in Congress and urged them to oppose widescale federal land sales. Clearly, however, Senator Lee does not plan to give up. BCHA and the outdoor recreation community will continue to monitor the situation and educate members of Congress of existing laws that allow for the transfer of discrete parcels of federal public lands to local governments, particularly where such lands are vital to community growth and the provision of affordable housing. Importantly, those laws require that land sales be transparent and include public input and review.