

# Chamber of Commerce of the United States



1615 H STREET, N.W. • WASHINGTON 6, D. C.  
National 8-2380

NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT  
RICHARD W. SMITH, MANAGER

June 21, 1961

Dear Member:

Your support of important public lands legislation is needed!

Enclosed is a copy of our letter to the Honorable Gracie Pfost, Chairman, House Public Lands Subcommittee, dated June 12, 1961, supporting four bills which would require an Act of Congress for all public land withdrawals in excess of 5,000 acres. These bills would amend P. L. 85-377, Military Land Withdrawal legislation (the Act of February 28, 1958, known as the Engle Act), which provided only for Congressional approval for defense withdrawals. The bills are almost identical except that H.R. 6377 contains a perfecting amendment recognizing Hawaii and Alaska as states. A fifth bill, H.R. 4060 (Aspinall), is also under consideration. It is inadequate for it provides only that Congress will be informed of any proposed withdrawal in excess of 5,000 acres. It does not require Congressional action of approval.

The balanced or multiple use of our lands and resources in public ownership is a critical factor in the resource-based economy of our country and is essential to our local, state and national growth. This national interest requires close scrutiny and limitation of withdrawals of Federal lands for restricted or single-use purposes. As we indicated in our enclosed statement, each large public land withdrawal, for any purpose, actually constitutes a national policy decision on resource allocation and use. These decisions should rightfully be made by the Congress. Communities and states affected by such land use decisions should also have the opportunity to make recommendations.

During 1959-60, sixteen non-military land withdrawals, each exceeding 5,000 acres, were made. In Alaska alone, about 11 million acres were withdrawn, with restrictions on resource use which appear questionable to that state. There are now pending before the Bureau of Land Management 79 applications for non-defense withdrawals, each exceeding 5,000 acres.

During a hearing in early June, administration witnesses from the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Defense, and the Federal Power Commission were generally opposed to the Legislation. Interior Department was strongly opposed. (Interior now makes the decisions on withdrawals.) The Subcommittee has scheduled further hearings on the bills on June 29-30. Both the Subcommittee and the sponsors have indicated the desirability of additional expressions of opinion from interested persons and organizations.

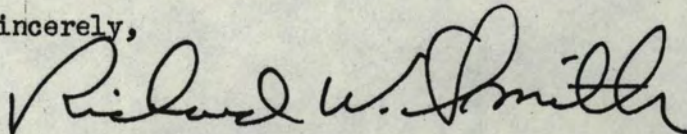


WHAT YOU CAN DO!

You can write, wire or call immediately, today, asking for the opportunity to be heard on June 29 or 30, or send a simple statement and request that it be included in the hearing record. Ask the Committee staff to inform you as to arrangements that can be made for you to be heard. If there are a large number of requests, it is possible that additional dates or different dates will be scheduled. Direct your request to Mrs. Pfost.

This is essential public lands legislation. Its passage is a must! We urge your active support! Act now!

Sincerely,



Richard W. Smith, Manager  
Natural Resources Department

enclosures