

# Chamber of Commerce of the United States



LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT  
CLARENCE R. MILES, MANAGER

1615 H STREET, N.W. • WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

NAtional 8-2380

June 12, 1961

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The Honorable Gracie Pfof, Chairman  
Public Lands Subcommittee  
House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs  
House Office Building  
Washington 25, D. C.

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Dear Mrs. Pfof:

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The Chamber of Commerce of the United States endorses the principles of four similar bills before you (H.R. 1785, H.R. 3342, H.R. 5252 and H.R. 6377) which would require an Act of Congress for public land withdrawals in excess of five thousand acres in the aggregate for any project or facility of any department or agency. We urge favorable action by your Subcommittee on any one of them.

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The bills would amend the Act of February 28, 1958, which relates only to withdrawals by the Department of Defense, and would bring all departments or agencies of the government under the provisions of that Act. The National Chamber, in a letter of January 30, 1957, to the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, endorsed the principles of H.R. 627, ultimately enacted as Public Law 85-337 of February 28, 1958, and urged certain amendments.

As we stated then, we firmly believe that: "Withdrawals or reservations of public lands for such purposes as military reservations generally hinder or prevent the development and utilization of natural resources on these lands. Large withdrawals or reservations (five thousand acres or over), therefore, should not be left to the discretion of the executive agencies involved. Congress itself should determine if the proposed withdrawal or reservation is necessary for the purpose stated, and if the need outweighs the benefit to the nation from the development and utilization of the natural resources on the land involved."

In our January 30, 1957 letter, we further stated: "H.R. 627 should be amended to make it apply to all withdrawals and reservations of this size." Our national well-being and future growth are closely

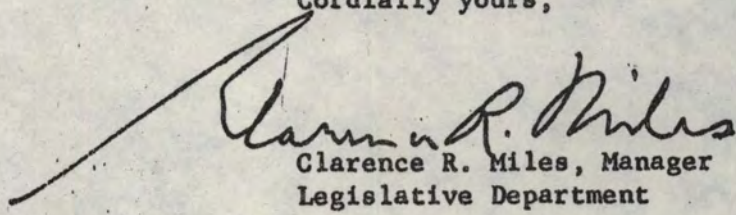
tied to the beneficial uses of all our natural resources. We cannot afford to restrict use of resources by exclusive-use public land withdrawals or reservations without close Congressional scrutiny and approval. The approval of each such large public land withdrawal is, in effect, a national policy decision and, as such, rightfully should be made in Congress.

We believe, also, that the communities and states affected by public land withdrawals should have the opportunity of expressing their viewpoints on such proposed withdrawals. We, therefore, suggest that your Committee include language which would require that before public land withdrawals of more than 5,000 acres are approved by Congress there be public notice and opportunity for public hearings in the state or states affected.

The National Chamber endorses the principles of H.R. 6377, H.R. 1785, H.R. 3342, or H.R. 5252, urges the public notice amendment, and hopes for immediate favorable action by your Committee.

I would appreciate it if you would make this letter a part of the hearings record on this legislation.

Cordially yours,



Clarence R. Miles

Clarence R. Miles, Manager  
Legislative Department