



# GOING TO EXTREMES

JULY 7, 2016

THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT EXTREMISM BEHIND  
THE GROWING MOVEMENT TO SEIZE  
AMERICA'S PUBLIC LANDS



Center for  
Western Priorities



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# 1

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 armed standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon provided the American public with a ringside seat to a disturbing trend on U.S. public lands: extremist and militia groups using America’s national forests, parks, monuments, and wildlife refuges to advance their anti-government beliefs.

But these far right-wing organizations are not operating in a vacuum. To the contrary, the armed insurrection in Oregon and Nevada before—led by Ammon Bundy and the Bundy family—share the same foundations as land transfer schemes promoted by some elected leaders in states throughout the West. Both rely upon a philosophy based in vehement anti-government ideologies, both have connections to organizations that espouse armed resistance, both employ pseudo-legal theories to justify their actions, and both use scholarly support from conspiracy theorists and discredited academics.

Our nation’s parks and network of public lands are one of our finest democratic achievements. Americans see management of public lands as one of the things our government does best. But over the last four years, politicians and special interest groups in 11 Western states and in Congress have tried to seize many of these places and turn them over to state and private control.

The elected officials supporting state seizure of U.S. public lands couch their arguments carefully, but our research shows their close associations to extreme individuals, groups, and ideology characterized by anti-government paranoia and a pseudo-legal approach to the Constitution.

Since the beginning of 2015, 54 land seizure bills have been introduced into Western states, including Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.<sup>1</sup> At least 22 state legislators with direct connections to anti-government ideologies or extremist groups were the primary sponsors on 29 of those bills.

Sitting at the hub of the movement and functioning as the bridge between extremism and the mainstream political debate are Utah Rep. Ken Ivory, Montana Sen. Jennifer Fielder, and their non-profit, the American Lands Council. A close analysis of Rep. Ivory and Sen. Fielder's activities, and those of other active land seizure proponents at the state level, shows how these efforts are a functional part of an aggressive anti-government movement that will grow more potent if reasonable Americans don't take action.

As The New York Times put it:



Many conservatives—Mr. Ivory among them—criticized Mr. [Ammon] Bundy's gun-toting tactics, but their grievances and goals are nearly identical.<sup>2</sup>

In the end, the crusade to give American public lands away to the states must be seen for what it is: the latest outgrowth of radical anti-government extremism, which mainstream legislators of both political parties should avoid.

In this report, an update to the original version we released in August 2015, the Center for Western Priorities examines the extremist origins and foundations of the movement to seize American public lands. We describe how public lands issues attract extremist elements, including members of organizations like the Oath Keepers and the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, who use public lands issues to promote their anti-government ideologies. We show that the anti-government supporters of this movement are growing bolder as some elected officials are becoming more open about their support for extremists. Finally, we show how the underpinnings of the movement are well outside mainstream conservative or federalist thought.

Below, we examine three aspects of the land seizure movement:

**IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK:** The land seizure movement's ideology is rooted in extreme anti-government beliefs such as [Posse Comitatus](#) and [County Supremacy](#), the idea that the federal government has no right to public lands and that the county sheriff is the final arbiter on any issue relating to their use.

**LEGISLATIVE SUPPORTERS:** Legislators in ten out of the eleven Western states whose legislatures considered land transfer bills in 2015 and 2016 have direct connections to anti-government ideologies and/or extremist groups that want to see the federal government unraveled or opposed by force. Western legislators also direct the American Lands Council, the most prominent organization advocating for the land seizure agenda.

**INFLUENCERS AND ECHO CHAMBER:** Those making the case for transferring public lands are a small group of conspiracy theorists and pseudo-academics, including one who wrote the "least credible history book in print." These so-called thought leaders, who include Alex Jones and Glenn Beck, also function as an echo chamber within the radical right.





## 2 LAND SEIZURE EFFORTS: A SHORT HISTORY

In what has become a “Sagebrush Rebellion” of the modern era, politicians across the U.S. have explored, introduced, and advocated for policies that purport to turn public lands and the valuable minerals under them over to the Western states, local governments, and private landowners.

The state of Utah has led the charge by passing a law in 2012 demanding that Congress turn over title to the state’s 31 million acres of national public lands or face a lawsuit.<sup>3</sup> Proponents claim that the federal government agreed to turn public lands over to the states upon entering the Union, and argue states could more effectively manage public lands. However, attorneys general in Western states have disagreed, including the Attorney General of Wyoming who wrote that the legal effort is “highly unlikely to succeed in court because its legal theories rest on weak foundations.”<sup>4</sup> In 2015 Utah legislators nevertheless appropriated \$2 million of taxpayer funds to hire a law firm to explore legal strategies for land seizures.<sup>5</sup> In 2016, Utah state lawmakers approved filing a \$14 million lawsuit, initially dedicating \$4.5 million in taxpayer funds to sue the federal government.<sup>6</sup>

Supporters have also investigated more incremental approaches to achieve their goal. These have included: studies of the economic viability of giving land to the states,<sup>7</sup> interstate compacts to coordinate efforts,<sup>8</sup> giving local officials special authority over public lands they deem a “catastrophic public nuisance,”<sup>9</sup> and attempts to chip away at federal law enforcement authority on federal public lands by asserting “concurrent jurisdiction.”<sup>10</sup>

The movement has been a notable presence in state capitols in recent years, although so far it has met with little concrete success. In 2015, a total of 36 land seizure bills were introduced in 11 Western states; only six passed.<sup>11</sup> Notably, most of the bills that passed did not demand a transfer, but instead mandated studies of land management. During the 2016 legislative session, public land seizure proponents had even fewer successes, especially outside of Utah, which remains the only state where efforts have picked up any steam. Only one out of 16 public lands seizure bills passed in Western legislatures outside of Utah during 2016 (five out of six passed in the Utah legislature).<sup>12</sup>





## MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE: SITE OF THE ARMED STANDOFF LED BY AMMON BUNDY

JOHN MATTHEWS  
(C 8/16/16 AD 2.0)

MALHEUR NATIONAL  
WILDLIFE REFUGE


### PUBLIC LANDS DRAW ANTI-GOVERNMENT & EXTREMIST GROUPS 3

Extremist groups have been on the rise during the Obama administration. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) documented approximately 150 extremist groups in 2008, rising to more than 1,000 in 2013.<sup>13</sup>

In the American West, public lands controversies have been particularly attractive to anti-government advocates. The armed standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, led by Ammon and Ryan Bundy, is the most prominent, but not the only example.

In Burns, Oregon in early January 2016, the Bundy brothers broke off from a peaceful demonstration opposing the jailing of two ranchers who were convicted of arson and poaching on public lands,<sup>14</sup> leading an armed group to the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Over the course of a 41-day standoff, the Bundys took their crusade further, stating that their overarching goal was to turn over public lands to private entities and get “the ranchers back to ranching and the miners back to mining, [and put] the loggers back to logging.”<sup>15</sup> Of the 36 known militants occupying the Malheur, more than half held extreme beliefs about U.S. public lands.<sup>16</sup>





## NEVADA RANCHER CLIVEN BUNDY

GAGE SKIDMORE  
CC BY-SA 2.0

Before Ammon and Ryan Bundy, it was their father, Cliven Bundy, making headlines for his extreme views on U.S. public lands. Cliven Bundy, who owes U.S. taxpayers \$1 million in grazing fees and fines dating back to 1993, garnered significant national media attention in April 2014. After the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) attempted to round up Bundy's cattle due to his refusal to pay grazing fees, Bundy rallied militia groups that streamed in to defend him at the ranch, causing a standoff that nearly ended in violence.<sup>17</sup> As Bundy's self-described "on-the-ground" militia commander put it:

**We locked them down...We had counter-sniper positions on their sniper positions. We had at least one guy—sometimes two guys—per BLM agent in there. So, it was a complete tactical superiority... If they made one wrong move, every single BLM agent in that camp would've died.<sup>18</sup>**

“““

The BLM's retreat became an inspiration for other extremist groups and for proponents of land seizures. As the SPLC reports:

“““

**To the invigorated antigovernment movement of the Obama era, Bundy was a kindred soul. What they saw was not a rancher who had operated outside of the regulations regarding public lands, a man who had stolen from the American people by refusing to pay for their use, but rather one of their own, a defiant Patriot with truth on his side.<sup>19</sup>**

Cliven Bundy could not avoid the consequences forever. He was arrested by the FBI in February 2016 and charged with multiple federal offenses, including assault on a federal law officer, conspiracy, extortion, and obstruction of justice.<sup>20</sup> His sons, Ammon and Ryan, also face multiple federal charges stemming from their involvement in the 2014 armed standoff at the Bundy Ranch and their 2016 occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to armed standoffs at the Bundy Ranch and the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, extremist groups have become involved in public lands controversies with some frequency in recent years. According to one analysis, at least 20 militants<sup>22</sup> who participated in the Malheur standoff showed up at other armed confrontations on public lands, including the White Hope Mine<sup>23</sup> in Montana, the Sugar Pine Mine<sup>24</sup> in Oregon, Recapture Canyon<sup>25</sup> in Utah, and the Bundy Ranch in Nevada.

Utah State Representative Ken Ivory, the public leader of the land seizure movement via the American Lands Council, has put public lands controversies in similarly confrontational terms, telling the extremist Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association that:

“““

**... we are in the Second Great Revolution, and it's a revolution of ideologies. But the battle is not being fought with bombs and with bullets. It's being fought with delta smelt. It's being fought with sage grouse .... It's being fought with trees.<sup>26</sup>**

Like Rep. Ivory and others advocating for states to take control of American public lands, Cliven Bundy and other county supremacists believe that the federal government has no right to public lands. Bundy told a talk show host:

**I'll be damned if this is the property of the United States. They have no business here. This is a sovereign state, the sovereign state of Nevada. The federal government has nothing to do with public land in Nevada.<sup>27</sup>**

“““

The Bundy family has worked to build bridges to Rep. Ivory and other more mainstream political figures to assist in their efforts. In April 2015, the Bundys called on their supporters to “swarm” the Nevada state capitol to endorse Nevada state Representative Michele Fiore’s bill asserting that the federal government has no right to lands and waters in the state.<sup>28</sup> After his arrest, Cliven Bundy’s attorney reached out to Rep. Ivory to help raise funds for Cliven Bundy’s defense (Ivory says that he never responded to the request).<sup>29</sup> And Ammon Bundy recently replaced his attorney with former Utah State Representative Morgan Philpot because he “is intimately familiar with the land use issues central to the Malheur protest.”<sup>30</sup>

**DEBRIS AT THE MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE  
AFTER THE 41-DAY ARMED STANDOFF**





# EXTREMIST GROUPS INVOLVED IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES 4

## OATH KEEPERS

**WHAT THEY BELIEVE:** Oath Keepers are former military and armed services veterans who arm themselves and [vow](#) “to disobey ‘unconstitutional’ orders from what they view as an increasingly tyrannical government.” Its members—which may number [approximately 30,000](#)—have shown up to guard [Ferguson, Missouri](#), offered advice on the [Jade Helm conspiracy theory](#) in Texas, and closed off a public access road to [defend](#) a miner breaking the law on public lands at the Sugar Pine Mine in Oregon.

**INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES:** Oath Keepers endorsed the idea of public land seizures on their [website](#), and their president, Stewart Rhodes, stated that the federal government “[stole](#)” [public lands](#) from Nevada at statehood.

## THREE PERCENTERS

**WHAT THEY BELIEVE:** According to the Anti-Defamation League, this group is a “[loosely organized movement](#) [centered](#) on an obscure, and not particularly accurate, Revolutionary War ‘statistic’ that claimed that only 3% of the American population during the Revolutionary War participated as combatants in the war.” They seek to “[protect our rights](#) against a tyrannical government” and “are also involved in [training citizens with military tactics](#) to add to our already uncountable numbers.”

**INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES:** The Three Percenters was one of the leading groups in the Malheur Refuge takeover. The president of the Idaho Three Percenters told the press that they had arrived to “establish a [security buffer](#) between the gentlemen here at the refuge, the community, citizens and law enforcement.” The Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights [reports](#) that the standoff caused the ranks of the group to increase by 15 percent.

## CONSTITUTIONAL SHERIFFS AND PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

**WHAT THEY BELIEVE:** CSPOA members [believe](#) that “federal law enforcement officials have exceeded their [Constitutional](#) authority.” According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, CSPOA leader Richard Mack, a former sheriff, “has become perhaps the biggest proselytizer of [county sheriff supremacy](#), the idea that sheriffs are the highest law enforcement authority. Legal experts say the notion, which gives rise to the term ‘constitutional sheriffs,’ has no standing in historical or modern jurisprudence.”

**INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES:** Sheriff Mack [stated](#) at the Bundy Ranch press conference, “I don’t believe that the BLM has any authority whatsoever...” In 2016, Cliven and Ryan Bundy were [arrested](#) while attempting to meet with Grant County, Oregon sheriff Glenn Palmer, a CSPOA member. Palmer is currently under investigation for meeting privately with the militants early during the Malheur standoff.

## MILITIA OF MONTANA

**WHAT THEY BELIEVE:** [Founded](#) by John Trochmann, a white supremacist, MOM is “one of the best known of the [paramilitary ‘patriot’ militias](#) that formed in the mid-to-late 1990s.” In 2011, Trochmann [indicated](#) that MOM had turned its organizing efforts to a new group focused on public lands, stating that “we [the Militia] have a little organization called the Sanders Natural Resource Council.”

**INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES:** The Sanders Natural Resource Council vocally [supported](#) State Senator Jennifer Fielder and her efforts to seize public lands in the state of Montana.

## PACIFIC PATRIOTS NETWORK

**WHAT THEY BELIEVE:** This organization is comprised of [various “patriot” groups](#) in the Pacific Northwest region. They consider themselves “[our communities’ first responders](#).”

**INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES:** The Pacific Patriots Network was one of the key groups leading up to and during the Malheur Refuge standoff. Even after some of the occupants were arrested and one killed, the PPN was issuing “[calls to action](#)” on its website in an attempt to get more people to the refuge in order to uphold the Constitution and detain law enforcement officials.

## JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY

**WHAT THEY BELIEVE:** The John Birch Society is a right-wing organization founded in 1958 and was “the most [robust political fringe group](#) of its day.” As the Southern Poverty Law Center writes, “Charges of racism and anti-Semitism have [dogged the John Birch Society](#) since its earliest days” for a variety of reasons, including its opposition to the Civil Rights Act because it believed that it was a Communist plot. Today it calls itself the “[defender of freedom](#).”

**INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES:** The John Birch Society has lent its brand to land seizure issues in the past. It was a key sponsor of the “[Utah Freedom Festival](#)” that featured panels on land seizures and county supremacy. And during the 2014 Cliven Bundy standoff, a [John Birch publication published a piece](#) on “decentralizing, and dramatically downsizing (and then abolishing) many of these agencies and returning the land to the states and the people.”



# EXTREMIST IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: POSSE COMITATUS AND COUNTY SUPREMACY

# 5

Cliven Bundy has summarized the extremist viewpoints of anti-government radicals by stating that he doesn't "recognize the United States government as even existing."<sup>31</sup> Some politicians and pundits have narrowed this argument to focus specifically on America's public lands. One conservative commentator, for example, told Fox News that "The Constitution simply does not authorize the federal government to own any of this land."<sup>32</sup>

In the West, the extremist "County Supremacy" philosophy and its forerunner, the Posse Comitatus movement, are major ideological underpinnings of the land seizure movement. At the heart of both ideologies are the notions of interpreting the Constitution to conform to one's ideological perspective and fanatical opposition to the federal government.

The long history of the Posse Comitatus movement (translated to "power of the county") started in the post-Reconstruction South, but was recast in the 1970s by William Potter Gale, a white supremacist who was angry that the Eisenhower administration sent troops to the American South to force

## EVOLVING PHILOSOPHIES

### THE EXTREMIST AND IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF THE LAND SEIZURE MOVEMENT

#### POSSE COMITATUS

A loosely organized movement that gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. Its members believe that the federal government has no law enforcement authority and that local citizens are empowered to form "posses" to use force and violence to defend the Constitution. The movement still has traction today, as evidenced by its members being involved in [shootings](#) of law enforcement officers in 2012 and its [invocation](#) by a Colorado state senator in debate over a land seizure bill in 2015.

#### SOVEREIGN CITIZENS

Adherents believe that they are not citizens of the U.S. and therefore do not have to follow its laws. Their oft-used tactic of gumming up the judicial system with [phony legal paperwork](#) gained prominence in the 1980s, although the Southern Poverty Law Center notes that the movement "has been [growing](#) at a fast pace since the late 2000s."

#### COUNTY SUPREMACY

This is the belief that the county sheriff is the highest law enforcement authority and that the American people, through the federal government, have no right to public lands. Rep. Ken Ivory, the public face of the land seizure movement, subscribes to this ideology as seen in his [endorsement](#) of the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association.

#### LAND SEIZURE MOVEMENT

Proponents of land seizures use quasi-legal arguments to underpin their belief that the federal government promised to give American public lands to the states when they entered the Union, and therefore believe that the federal government (and the American people) have no right to public lands.

integration in 1958.<sup>33</sup> As described in the Washington Monthly, Gale responded by preaching an ideology where:



**...County sheriffs were the supreme legal law enforcement officers in the land, and that county residents had the right to form a posse to enforce the Constitution—however they, as “sovereign citizens,” chose to interpret it. Public officials who interfered, instructed Gale, should be “hung by the neck” at high noon.<sup>34</sup>**

Over the 1970s and 1980s, the Posse Comitatus movement grew, and its members continued to protest the federal government by breaking the law in ways such as not paying taxes, threatening violence against federal officials, and even killing U.S. law enforcement officers.<sup>35</sup> The ideology adapted into both the sovereign citizen and militia movements of the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>36</sup> The American West became somewhat of a haven for these groups during this period—as the SPLC puts it, extremists were (and continue to be) particularly attracted to “staking a claim in the American West” for various reasons including the individualist “history and identity” of states like Montana.<sup>37</sup>

Those who express their frustration with and opposition to the federal government by breaking laws that they believe do not apply to them remain visible in the mainstream, and the Posse Comitatus movement lingers even today. Like the Posse Comitatus tax dodgers of the 1980s, Cliven Bundy has amassed more than \$1 million in grazing fees and fines that he owes to U.S. taxpayers over the past 23 years, but has refused to pay on the grounds that the land belongs to the state, not the federal government.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, Posse Comitatus members were involved in the shootings of law enforcement officials outside of New Orleans in 2012,<sup>39</sup> and Colorado State Senator Ken Lambert invoked the ideology when speaking in defense of a bill to undermine public lands management.<sup>40</sup>

Over the years, the Posse Comitatus philosophy laid the groundwork for the “County Supremacy” movement. County supremacists believe that the federal government has no right to public lands, and that the county sheriff, not state or federal officials, is the final arbiter on any issue relating to their use.<sup>41</sup> The SPLC notes that “today’s militias...and county supremacy movement” are “absolutely inseparable” from the concepts of the Posse Comitatus movement.<sup>42</sup>

The County Supremacy movement gained prominence during the Sagebrush Rebellion of the 1980s and 1990s, when a series of Western counties passed resolutions declaring that states or counties had authority over federal lands.<sup>43</sup>

This radical viewpoint continues to have traction, as evidenced by a bill heard by the Nevada state legislature in 2015 asserting that federal agencies recognize “the sheriff as the primary law enforcement authority on the land managed by the federal agency.”<sup>44</sup> In 2016, the Arizona and Idaho state legislatures considered “catastrophic public nuisance” bills that propose giving special authorities to county sheriffs and other local government officials on public lands.<sup>45</sup>



## LAND SEIZURE PROPONENTS WITH EXTREMIST TIES

# 6

Many of the Western state legislators who have introduced land seizure bills are directly linked to the extremist groups or subscribe to the anti-government ideologies discussed above. The most prominent are Utah State Representative Ken Ivory—the founder of the American Lands Council—and Montana State Senator Jennifer Fielder, the organization’s current president.

Like other anti-government advocates, Rep. Ivory and Sen. Fielder use complicated but erroneous legal theories to support the notion that the federal government has no right to public lands. For example, Rep. Ivory claims that the federal government promised to “transfer the land back” to the states,<sup>46</sup> but legal experts maintain that he has extensively misinterpreted the law.<sup>47</sup>

Rep. Ivory has also directly endorsed the philosophy of County Supremacy by signing a resolution authored by the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA). The resolution—which directly reflects the governing principles of county supremacy—states that the “arrest of citizens or seizure of persons or property without first notifying and obtaining the express consent of the local sheriff” would not be tolerated.<sup>48</sup>

The American Lands Council has partnered with organizations like CSPOA and the John Birch Society to sponsor conferences, including “Utah’s Freedom Conference,” where land seizure advocates and anti-government extremists discussed their plans to systematically defy BLM regulations on public land use and justify their position on land seizure.<sup>49</sup>

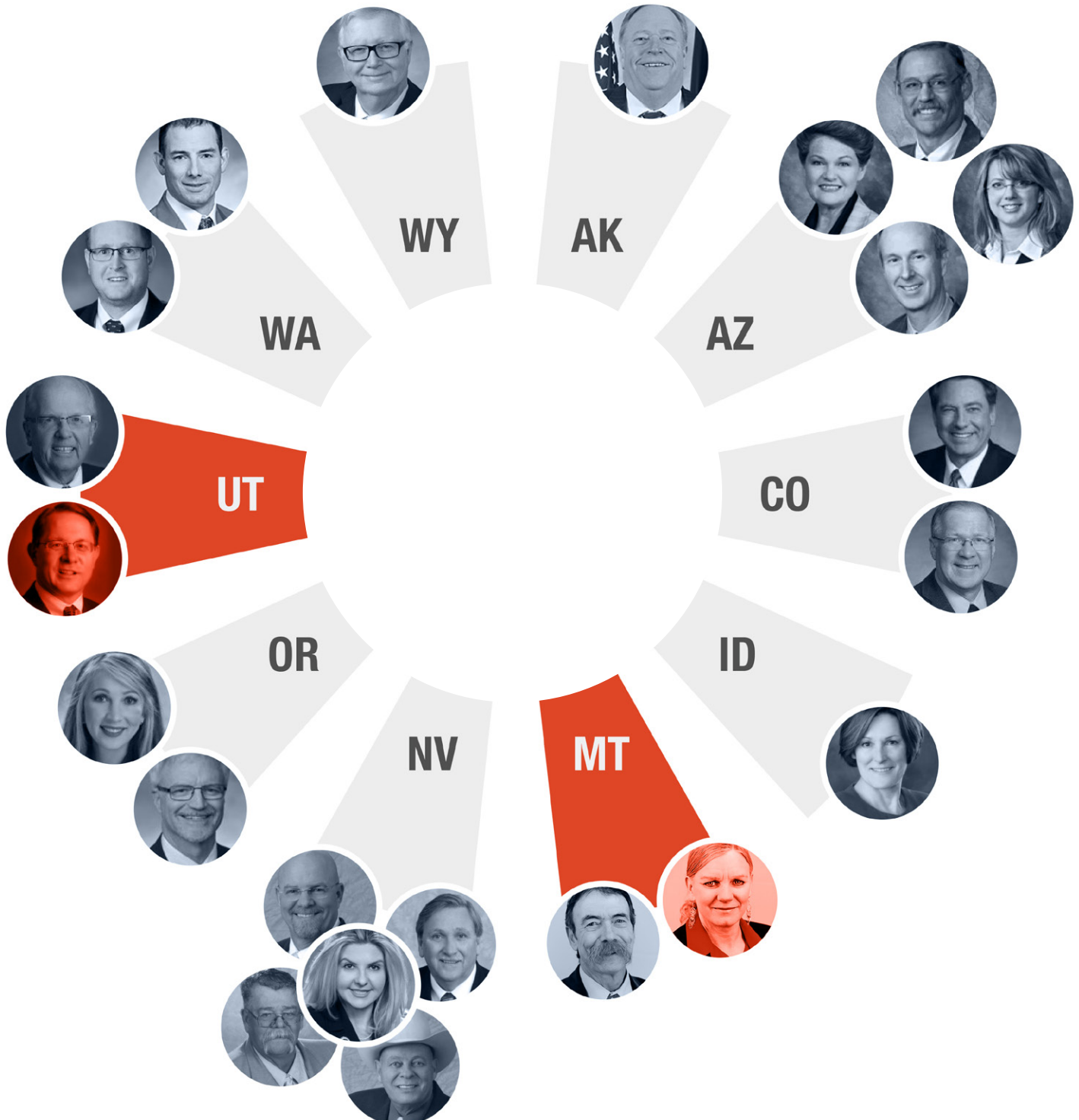
In early January of 2016, Rep. Ivory handed the organization off to Montana State Senator Jennifer Fielder, a somewhat surprising move since Fielder repeatedly denied being an ALC member in January of 2015.<sup>50</sup>

Sen. Fielder has close ties to the militia movement. As previously noted, Sen. Fielder is a member of the Sanders Natural Resource Council.<sup>51</sup> According to public records, SNRC is run by members of the Militia of Montana including John Trochmann, who has “white supremacist leanings.”<sup>52</sup> The Oath Keepers referred to Fielder as “an excellent source” on their website.<sup>53</sup> Sen. Fielder expressed sympathy for the militants at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, saying that they were only undertaking “civil disobedience.”<sup>54</sup>

Rep. Ivory and Sen. Fielder are not the only legislators who both support seizing U.S. public lands and are deeply connected to extremist ideologies or groups. Indeed, a review of recent activity makes it clear that the sponsors of land seizure legislation in statehouses in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming share the goals of the county supremacist movement.

In **ten out of the eleven Western states** that saw land seizure proposals in 2015 and 2016 legislative sessions, proponents had ties to extremist groups or ideologies. According to an analysis by the Center for Western Priorities at least 22 state legislators with direct connections to anti-government ideologies or extremist groups were the primary sponsors on 29 pieces of land seizure legislation during the 2015 and 2016 legislative sessions. These legislators include:

## LAND SEIZURE: A Legislative Network with Extremist Ties



## STATE

## LEGISLATOR & LAND SEIZURE BILL SUPPORTED

## EXTREMIST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND RHETORIC

### ALASKA

#### House Speaker Mike Chenault

[House Bill 115](#)

After President Obama issued an executive order on gun control following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, Chenault sponsored a [bill](#) to nullify federal law and allow Alaskan authorities to arrest federal officials attempting to enforce federal gun laws in the state. He [said](#) at the time, **“Tragedy is not a license for federal encroachment on constitutionally protected freedoms.”**

#### Representative Brenda Barton

[House Bill 2644](#)

[House Bill 2321](#)

[House Bill 2318](#)

[House Bill 2658](#)

[House Concurrent Memorial 2005](#)

During the 2013 federal government shutdown, Barton [called on](#) **“constitutional sheriffs”** to revoke the authority of National Park Service rangers who she [referred to](#) as **“thugs.”** She also [referred to](#) Sheriff Richard Mack, leader of the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, as **“my friend Richie Mack”** and [asked her Facebook followers](#) whether they have **“...considered asking your county elected sheriff if they are considering revoking the arrest powers ... to federal agents operating within their county?”** She has also [compared President Obama to Adolf Hitler](#).

#### Representative Bob Thorpe

[House Bill 2644](#)

[House Bill 2658](#)

[House Concurrent Memorial 2005](#)

[House Bill 2176](#)

Thorpe [called](#) President Obama a **“rodeo clown”** and later sponsored [legislation](#) to nullify executive orders. He [said](#), **“We’re telling the president...that if he provides an executive order, it doesn’t apply to the state of Arizona.”** During a hearing on legislation to ban Agenda 21 in Arizona, Thorpe [told](#) supporters, **“...if the Forest Service comes in or any federal government entity comes in and starts closing your roads...you tell your sheriff to get out there with bolt cutters and open those roads back up.”** Thorpe also [traveled to](#) the Bundy Ranch in 2014.

### ARIZONA

#### Representative Mark Finchem

[House Bill 2051](#)

[House Bill 2024](#)

[House Bill 2318](#)

[House Bill 2176](#)

Finchem expressed [support](#) for the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupation and believes law enforcement should be [charged](#) for the death of LaVoy Finicum. He [believes](#) that **“states are co-equal sovereigns”** with the federal government and is [active](#) with the Tucson Oath Keepers.

#### State Representative Kelly Townsend

[House Bill 2658](#)

[House Concurrent Memorial 2005](#)

[House Bill 2176](#)

Townsend participated in a 2014 rally at the Bundy ranch with the Oath Keepers, [stating](#) at the time that the situation reminded her **“of Tiananmen Square. I don’t recognize my country at this point.”** In 2015, Townsend sponsored legislation for Arizona to officially join a call for the Convention of States. Townsend is also a [co-founder](#) of the Greater Phoenix Tea Party.



STATE	LEGISLATOR & LAND SEIZURE BILL SUPPORTED	EXTREMIST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND RHETORIC
COLORADO	<p><b>State Senator</b>  <b>Jerry Sonnenberg</b>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 232</a></p>	<p>Sonnenberg <a href="#">supported</a> the 2013 secession movement within the state of Colorado, in which counties sought to secede from the state to form a 51st state in order to protect local sovereignty. Rep. Sonnenberg also expressed sympathy for the situation at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, <a href="#">saying</a>, <b>“When you end up messing with someone’s livelihood, someone who’s been on a ranch for 100 years and now they have to deal with the federal government...people are going to fight. And I understand that.”</b></p>
	<p><b>State Senator Kent Lambert</b>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 16-160</a></p>	<p>During debate on a bill to chip away at federal law enforcement authority on public lands, Lambert <a href="#">invoked</a> <b>“Posse Comitatus,”</b> claiming the ideology is <b>“what is at stake here.”</b></p>
IDAHO	<p><b>State Representative</b>  <b>Judy Boyle</b>  <a href="#">House Joint Memorial 14</a></p>	<p>Coalition of Western States member who went to Burns, Oregon in support of Ammon Bundy. She was <a href="#">present</a> at a meeting where COWS tried to extract operational information and law enforcement strategy during the armed occupation.</p>
MONTANA	<p><b>State Senator Jennifer Fielder</b>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 215</a>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 274</a>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 298</a>  <a href="#">Senate Bill 348</a></p>	<p>Fielder is a <a href="#">member</a> of the Sanders Natural Resource Council. According to public records, SNRC is run by members of the Militia of Montana including <a href="#">John Trochmann</a>, who has <b>“white supremacist leanings.”</b> In September of 2015, Fielder promoted the American Lands Council agenda at a conference hosted by the Citizens Equal Rights Alliance, an anti-Native American group that the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights says is <b>“dedicated to terminating tribal governments”</b> in Kalispell, Montana. The Oath Keepers referred to Fielder as “an excellent source” on their <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
	<p><b>State Representative</b>  <b>Kerry White</b>  <a href="#">House Bill 496</a></p>	<p>Political observers have <a href="#">described</a> White as a supporter of the County Supremacy movement. White indicated on a <a href="#">questionnaire</a> that he would support authorizing local law enforcement to arrest federal officials implementing the Affordable Care Act in Montana. He planned to <a href="#">join the Bundy Ranch standoff</a>, <a href="#">stating</a> that it was about <b>“government control over people’s lives.”</b></p>

## STATE

### LEGISLATOR & LAND SEIZURE BILL SUPPORTED

### EXTREMIST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND RHETORIC

**Assemblywoman  
Michelle Fiore**  
[Assembly Bill 408](#)

Fiore attended a rally in support of Cliven Bundy where she [swore the Oath Keepers oath](#); she personally thanked the Oath Keepers for defending the Bundy ranch, [stating](#), **“it’s not over and there is going to be more to come and I hope this was ...a big loud and clear message to the federal government that we are not gonna stand for this.”** Rep. Fiore also provided [support](#) to the Malheur occupiers in January 2016. In 2016, she [stated](#), **“Everyone knows I’m a supporter of the Bundy family...Our relationship is pretty well documented.”**

**Assemblyman  
Ira Hansen**  
[Assembly Bill 238](#)  
[Senate Joint Resolution 1](#)

Hansen lost his leadership role in the Nevada Assembly in 2014 after prior [racist statements](#) came to light, including a statement that the **“relationship of Negroes and Democrats is truly a master-slave relationship, with the benevolent master knowing what’s best for his simple minded darkies.”** Hansen hung a Confederate flag **“proudly and in honor and in memory of a great cause.”** In 2015, Hansen [introduced](#) a bill that would make the sheriff the pre-eminent authority in each county. He also [supported](#) Cliven Bundy even after Bundy’s [racist remarks](#).

## NEVADA

**Senator  
Pete Goicoechea**  
[Senate Joint Resolution 1](#)

Goicoechea was [encouraged](#) by the events at the Bundy Ranch to continue his push for lands transfer legislation. He [said](#) **“That was martial law the way they imposed it down there on Golde Butte. That can only be done by the President or Congress.”**

**Assemblyman  
Jim Wheeler**  
[Senate Joint Resolution 1](#)

Wheeler [spoke](#) at an Elko Minutemen event about the Second Amendment. He told attendees that Nevada would not recognize an executive order **“in contravention to the Second Amendment.”** Wheeler said he would [vote for slavery](#) if his constituents supported it.

**Assemblyman  
John Ellison**  
[Senate Joint Resolution 1](#)

John Ellison [spoke](#) at an Elko Minuteman event about the Second Amendment. Ellison visited the Bundy Ranch during the stand-off in April 2014, and has praised Ken Ivory’s land seizure advocacy. He [believed](#) that the County Sheriff had **“ruling authority.”**



## STATE

### LEGISLATOR & LAND SEIZURE BILL SUPPORTED

### EXTREMIST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND RHETORIC

## OREGON

#### Representative Carl Wilson

[House Joint Memorial 13](#)

[House Bill 3240](#)

Wilson was [praised](#) by the Oath Keepers for [standing with](#) miners breaking the law at the Sugar Pine Mine. In a May 2015 [Facebook post](#), the Oath Keepers stated that **“Every Politician should be supporting the miner’s rights or else they are violating their oath. At least Oregon state Rep. Carl Wilson Supports Miners’ Access to Due Process.”**

#### Senator Kim Thatcher

[Senate Joint Memorial 7](#)

On Saturday, May 30, Thatcher [spoke](#) at a ‘Will Not Comply’ Rally on the steps of the Oregon State Capitol. The rally was a response to the passage of Senate Bill 941, which [required](#) background checks for firearm transfers between private parties. A [press release](#) on the Oath Keepers website stated that **“The Rally started at midday, and was attended by several hundred people, including Oath Keepers, Heirs to Patrick Henry, and others.”**

## UTAH

#### Representative Ken Ivory

[House Bill 0464](#)

Rep. Ivory [signed](#) the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association resolution stating that the **“arrest of citizens or seizure of persons or property without first notifying and obtaining the express consent of the local sheriff”** would not be tolerated. After signing CSPOA’s resolution, Ivory gave a [speech](#) to the group in which he stated that **“we are in the Second Great Revolution, and it’s a revolution of ideologies. But the battle is not being fought with bombs and with bullets. It’s being fought with delta smelt. It’s being fought with sage grouse. It’s being fought with your Travel Management Plan. It’s being fought with trees.”** Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who has been identified by the [SPLC](#) as an extremist and leader of the Patriot Movement, [called](#) Ivory a **“hero”** for his work on land seizure in 2015.

#### Representative Mike Noel

[House Bill 270](#)

[House Bill 276](#)

Noel has [called](#) federal law enforcement agencies **“ridiculous”** for operating on public lands, saying, **“The only legitimate authority is the county sheriffs.”** He suggested the fight over public lands could lead to **“bloodshed.”** Noel participated in the [Paria Canyon ATV](#) protest with indicted Malheur occupier [Shawna Cox](#). The Salt Lake Tribune has [described](#) him as a **“close friend”** of Cox. He also [signed](#) the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association resolution stating that the **“arrest of citizens or seizure of persons or property without first notifying and obtaining the express consent of the local sheriff”** would not be tolerated.

## STATE

### LEGISLATOR & LAND SEIZURE BILL SUPPORTED

### EXTREMIST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND RHETORIC

#### Representative Matt Shea

[House Bill 1192](#)

Shea [signed](#) the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association resolution stating that the “**arrest of citizens or seizure of persons or property without first notifying and obtaining the express consent of the local sheriff**” would not be tolerated. Shea also [worked](#) with the Oath Keepers to send a delegation of Western state legislators and sheriffs to the Bundy ranch. He has [expressed](#) concern about a takeover of the country by a secret army run by the Obama administration, noted that he was “**aware of**” concentration camps run by FEMA, and [founded](#) the Washington Anti-Agenda 21 Caucus. Rep. Shea also [visited](#) the standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in January 2016.

#### Representative David Taylor

[House Bill 1192](#)

On March 12, 2014, Washington State Representative David Taylor [signed](#) a CSPOA resolution stating that “**arrest of citizens or seizure of persons or property without first notifying and obtaining the express consent of the local sheriff**” will not be tolerated.” Taylor also [joined](#) the Bundy Ranch standoff in 2014.

#### Representative David Miller

[House Bill 209](#)

[House Joint Resolution 0005](#)

In 2012, Miller sponsored [legislation](#) that would prepare Wyoming for the collapse of the federal government; the bill created a state-run military and a Wyoming-specific form of currency.

WASHINGTON

WYOMING

## MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE: SITE OF THE ARMED STANDOFF LED BY AMMON BUNDY

CACOPHONY  
CC BY-SA 3.0





# THE MALHEUR STANDOFF & THE COALITION OF WESTERN STATES (COWS)

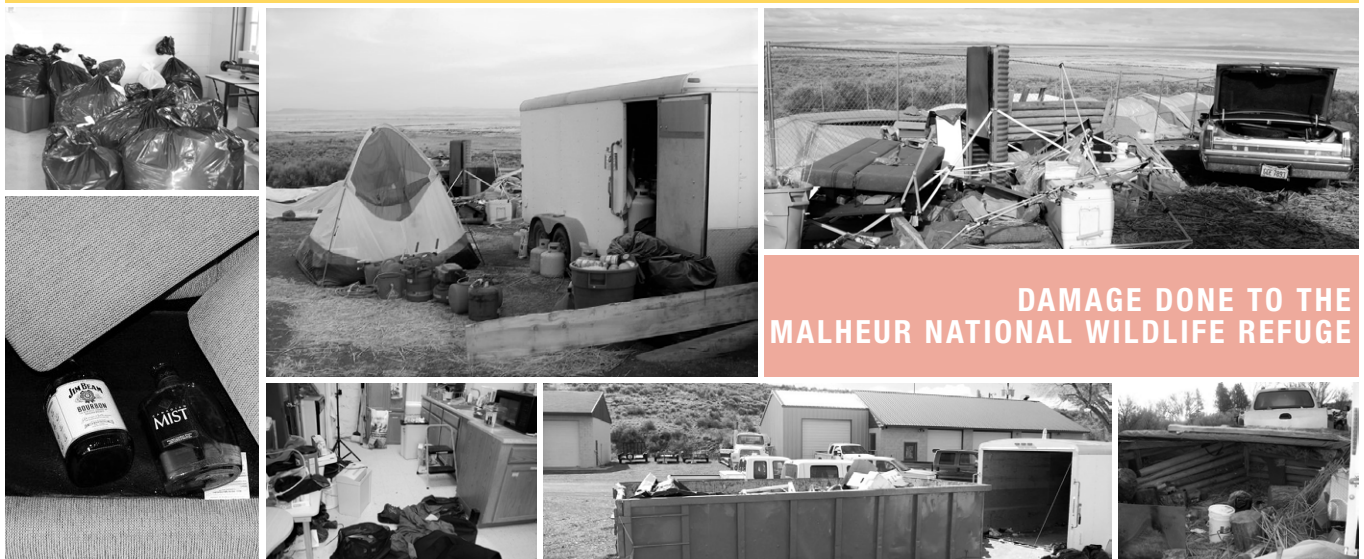
## A NUMBER OF LEGISLATORS PLANNED, PARTICIPATED IN, AND SUPPORTED THE BUNDY MILITANTS DURING THE OREGON STANDOFF.

The militant occupation at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge further deepened the ties between right-wing elected officials and public lands extremists. Led by the [Coalition of Western States \(COWS\)](#)—which formed in the aftermath of the Bundy ranch standoff to “restore management of public lands to the States where it Constitutionally belongs”—politicians from across the West played a high profile role in the occupation.

Leadership within COWS not only knew about the Bundys’ intention to occupy government property in Oregon before it happened, they also provided material support to the militants. [According to Oregon Public Broadcasting](#), COWS’ engagement in the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge was the “latest step in an ongoing and organized campaign by these lawmakers, essentially the political arm of the militant movement, to make a once-radical political cause part of the mainstream”

Members of COWS passed along intelligence to the militants gleaned from a meeting between the FBI, local officials, and seven COWS members: Oregon state Rep. Dallas Heard, Washington state Reps. Matt Shea and Graham Hunt, Idaho Reps. Judy Boyle, Sage Dixon, and Heather Scott, and Nevada Assemblywoman Michele Fiore. COWS members, including Assemblywoman Fiore and Rep. Shea, also helped the militants plan press events and provided militants with a “security specialist,” Anthony Bosworth. As the FBI worked to bring the occupation to a close, Bosworth [helped some militants flee](#) from the wildlife refuge, including Blaine Cooper, who helped the Bundy brothers organize the occupation.

Not only are these lawmakers supporting public land extremists in their illegal attempts to seize public lands, but they are also trying to push bills through state legislatures to seize American public lands. Nevada Assemblywoman Michele Fiore, for example, sponsored [A.B. 408](#), which declared a swath of U.S. public lands in Nevada “common property of the citizens of the state.” Washington Rep. Matt Shea sponsored [H.B. 1192](#), which would have led to the “disposal” of public lands within Washington. Both pieces of legislation failed.



# 7

## THE INFLUENCERS AND ECHO CHAMBER

Utah State Representative Ken Ivory, Montana Senator Jennifer Fielder, and their political allies have relied upon a number of discredited experts and conspiracy theorists to design and promote the convoluted legal and historical justification for their claim that the federal government has no right to public lands. These “thought leaders” also function as an echo chamber for the extreme right. They include:



Dr. Michael D. Evans,  
CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

### DAVID BARTON

Barton is a discredited historian who authored the “least credible history book in print,”<sup>55</sup> which was eventually recalled by the publisher because the “basic truths just were not there.”<sup>56</sup> One example of Barton’s take on history is that America’s founding fathers “already had the entire debate on creation and evolution” despite the fact that Charles Darwin did not publish *The Origin of Species* until 1859.<sup>57</sup>

Rep. Ivory has closely associated himself with Barton, stating publicly that he consulted with Barton “about various aspects of my lands bill” and that Barton “expressed a willingness to help prepare some crucial history and background for what we are doing. Sure do love the great work that man does!”<sup>58</sup> Rep. Ivory also appeared on Barton’s WallBuilders radio show at least four times to promote public land seizures.<sup>59</sup>



Sean P. Anderson,  
CC BY 2.0

### ALEX JONES

Jones hosts the talk show and website “Infowars,”<sup>60</sup> and has been called “the most prolific conspiracy theorist in contemporary America.”<sup>61</sup> According to the SPLC, “Jones is notorious for epic rants about ‘New World Order’ plots for world government, enforced eugenics, secret internment camps, militarized police and behind-the-scenes control by a global corporate cabal.”<sup>62</sup> Jones recently gained fame for fueling the Jade Helm conspiracy theory in Texas.<sup>63</sup>

Jones has thrown his support behind Rep. Ivory, hosting him on his show in January 2015 to discuss public lands.<sup>64</sup> During the show, Jones claimed that “the U.N., UNESCO, others, claim most of the federal lands in this country as collateral on the national debt....” He also stated that the idea of “taking back” public lands was “huge” and “so exciting,” and that Rep. Ken Ivory is “a hero.”





## GLENN BECK

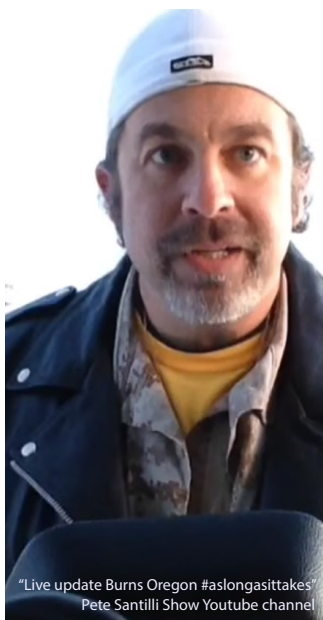
Glenn Beck is a conservative political commentator who previously was with Fox News and now runs his own media network called The Blaze.<sup>65</sup> A 2010 poll noted that Beck is “the most highly regarded individual among Tea Party supporters” and is perceived to be an “educator.”<sup>66</sup> Beck is known for his controversial statements, such as saying that President Obama has “a deep-seated hatred for white people.”<sup>67</sup> Beck is a famous conspiracy theorist and has published a book on Agenda 21, in which “a UN-led program spawned an authoritarian state where individuals are stripped of all personal rights and freedoms.”<sup>68</sup>

Rep. Ivory appeared on Glenn Beck’s show in April 2014 to promote seizing public lands. Beck told viewers that “This is an avenue that actually seems to have some real teeth and could work.”<sup>69</sup>



## KRISANNE HALL

KrisAnne Hall is a former prosecutor turned “constitutional educator” who espouses anti-government views and unsupported legal theories.<sup>70</sup> Hall was fired from her job as a prosecutor in Florida and is no longer eligible to practice law there.<sup>71</sup> She claims states have the right to nullify federal laws—an idea that has been thoroughly rejected by the Supreme Court. During the Oregon standoff, Hall traveled to Oregon to give lectures supporting Ammon Bundy’s extremist beliefs and debunked legal theories.



## PETE SANTILLI

Pete Santilli operated a YouTube channel in which he called for people to come to Oregon to join the militants who had taken over the Malheur refuge. In an off-camera moment just before the refuge takeover began, Ammon Bundy told Santilli, “They’re to go to the MNWR... after the rally.” As the armed occupation continued, Santilli told his audience “All you good patriots out there, it’s time to staff up.” He continued, “If you’re a patriot, ok, and you believe in what we’re doing here... you need to get in your car and come out here.”<sup>72</sup>

Santilli is also charged in connection with his actions at the Bundy Ranch in Nevada during the original 2014 standoff. Prosecutors say he was part of the “organizing nucleus” in Bunkerville.<sup>73</sup> His lawyers claim Santilli is a journalist whose actions are protected by the First Amendment.



UTAH REPRESENTATIVE KEN IVORY

MICHAEL JOLLEY  
CC BY 2.0

## IVORY, FIELDER, & THE AMERICAN LANDS COUNCIL: BRIDGE FROM THE EXTREME TO THE MAINSTREAM

# 8

Despite its origins in extremist ideology and its support from legislators with ties to radical groups, the land seizure policy proposal has made its way into the mainstream political debate. This is thanks to Utah State Representative Ken Ivory and Montana State Senator Jennifer Fielder, who function as the bridge between the extreme and the mainstream.

On one hand, in his role as an activist and founder of the American Lands Council, Rep. Ivory has spent significant time courting the anti-government and extremist groups. He appears with influencers in the right-wing echo chamber, such as on Glenn Beck's "The Blaze,"<sup>74</sup> David Barton's "Wall Builders,"<sup>75</sup> and Alex Jones' conspiracy theory talk radio show.<sup>76</sup> Sen. Fielder became a prominent speaker at land seizure events starting in April 2014, as the first Bundy standoff began in Nevada.<sup>77</sup> As the 2016 Malheur standoff intensified, Fielder raised her profile in mainstream media outlets, writing op-eds defending the Bundys' goals of removing federal government control over national land.<sup>78</sup>

Rep. Ivory and Sen. Fielder also directly visit patriot and extremist groups. For example, Rep. Ivory addressed Montana's Sanders Natural Resources Council in December 2013,<sup>79</sup> a group which has been directly linked to the Militia of Montana.<sup>80</sup> Sen. Fielder is a member of the SNRC. Rep. Ivory also spoke to the Colorado Mesa County Patriots in April 2013,<sup>81</sup> a group which believes that the Federal Reserve is an unconstitutional institution and promotes strategies "to uncouple free men and women from the albatross that the political class has created" in the Federal Reserve.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand, in their capacities as elected officials and figureheads of the land seizure movement, Rep. Ivory and Sen. Fielder have facilitated the acceptance of radical public lands policy proposals into the mainstream political debate. Mainstream politicians have begun to embrace this idea, including:

- ■ Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio supported legislation endorsing land transfers in the U.S. Senate,<sup>83</sup> Senator Rand Paul stated in June 2015 that he would “either sell or turn over all the land management to the states,”<sup>84</sup> and Rick Santorum called for public lands to be transferred to state control in 2012.<sup>85</sup> Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker sat down with Rep. Ivory in July 2015.<sup>86</sup>
- ■ During his campaign for president, Senator Ted Cruz expressed support for disposing of public lands into state and private hands, saying, “I believe we should transfer as much federal land as possible back to the states and ideally back to the people.”<sup>87</sup> He even said that Texas, which has virtually no public lands, still has too much public land.<sup>88</sup>
- ■ In March 2015, 51 members of the U.S. Senate voted to support a non-binding amendment to a budget resolution from Senator Lisa Murkowski endorsing land sell-offs and transfers.<sup>89</sup>
- ■ The “Federal Lands Action Group,” which formed in April 2015 by Utah Reps. Chris Stewart and Rob Bishop, aims to “develop a legislative framework for transferring public lands to local ownership and control.”<sup>90</sup> Other members include Nevada Reps. Mark Amodei and Crescent Hardy, Wyoming Rep. Cynthia Lummis, Tennessee Rep. Diane Black, and South Carolina Rep. Jeff Duncan.
- ■ The Republican National Committee endorsed “the imminent transfer of public lands to all willing western states” in its 2014 official platform.<sup>91</sup>



[Ken Ivory](#) @KenIvoryUT · 25 Apr 2014

W @SenTedCruz & @SenatorFielder re #TransferPublicLands.





# SIDE BY SIDE:

## REP. IVORY AND SEN. FIELDER WITH THE EXTREME AND THE MAINSTREAM



Michele Fiore @VoteFiore · 10 May 2014

Here'e our money EDUCATION  
FUNDING SOLUTION min. 2:52 crystal  
clear [youtube.com/watch?v=eA\\_mHj ...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eA_mHj...)  
[@KenIvoryUT](#) [@AmericanLandsCn](#)

YouTube



**What are the biggest myths about The Transfer of Public Lands Act?**  
Ken Ivory explains away the four biggest myths about The Transfer of Public Lands Act.



Ken Ivory @KenIvoryUT · 11 May 2014

@VoteFiore @AmericanLandsCn looking forward to touching base with you soon  
re #TransferPublicLands



Assemblywoman Michelle Fiore, a Bundy family supporter who has taken the Oath Keeper vow, endorsed Rep. Ivory's work on land seizures. He responded, "Looking forward to touching base with you soon."



Ken Ivory @KenIvoryUT · Nov 16

Great week with David Barton, MT Sen. Fielder and more! #utpol  
[@AmericanLandsCn](#).



Rep. Ivory and Sen. Fielder with discredited historian David Barton.



Ken Ivory @KenIvoryUT · Nov 14

Sen. Ted Cruz "draw a clear line in the sand to a better way to freedom & opportunity" #utpol.



U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz spoke at the Pro Family Legislators Conference, where Rep. Ivory presented on state jurisdiction.



Jennifer Fielder @SenatorFielder · 23 Jun 2014

Ken Ivory tried the traditional route of educating him, but I thought Seal Commander Ryan Zinke needed...



Sen. Fielder and Rep. Ivory "educating" U.S. Rep. Ryan Zinke with an American Lands Council poster in the background.

# SIDE BY SIDE: CONTINUED



**Ken Ivory** @KenIvoryUT · 18 Apr 2013  
Sen. Murkowski "We need to Divest the Federal Govt of Public Lands":  
[youtu.be/VVpVxtds4RQ](https://youtu.be/VVpVxtds4RQ) via @youtube #utpol #utleg  
@AmericanLandsCn

YouTube



U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski endorsed land seizures, which Rep. Ivory highlighted on his Twitter page. In March 2015, 51 members of the U.S. Senate voted to support a non-binding amendment (from Sen. Lisa Murkowski) endorsing land sell-offs.



**Ken Ivory** @KenIvoryUT · 3 Oct 2015  
Speaking later at the Practical Federalism Conference in NH. Next up **Cruz**, **Fiorina** and Rick **Santorum**. #FreeTheLands



Rep. Ivory spoke at the American Principles Project's "Practical Federalism Forum" alongside U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, and Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina. Ivory spoke in his capacity as the then-President of the American Lands Council to educate attendees on the land seizure effort.



Utah Rep Fights Federal Land Grab

The Alex Jones Channel  
Subscribe 1,671,034

7,305

Alex Jones, a prolific conspiracy theorist, hosts the talk show "Infowars." Rep. Ivory has appeared on Jones' show to discuss the sell-off of public lands.



Ken Ivory on Glenn Beck Radio Discussing the Transfer of Public Lands

ALC  
Subscribe 209

1,330

Glenn Beck, a conspiracy theorist and conservative political commentator, has interviewed Rep. Ivory on his work on public land seizure and called him a "hero."



# 9

## CONCLUSION

Our public lands are an endowment for this and future generations of Americans, and as such, efforts to make large-scale, permanent changes to this heritage deserve considerable scrutiny. Although land seizure proponents have couched their arguments carefully, a wholesale grab of American lands is one of the most far-reaching changes to public lands management considered in recent memory.

Proponents of land seizures have avoided answering questions about how states would shoulder billions of dollars in fire management costs, create agencies with the scope needed to oversee millions of acres of lands, provide for the level of public recreation access available on federal lands but often lacking today in state-managed land, or counter the huge incentives to sell or auction these lands off to the highest bidders. This is in large part because the land transfer movement is driven by ideology, not achievable land management concerns.

Thanks to Utah State Representative Ken Ivory, Montana State Senator Jennifer Fielder, and the American Lands Council functioning as the bridge between the radical right-wing and mainstream politicians, the issue will likely continue to surface for consideration at the state and federal level. Ammon and Cliven Bundy now appear poised to make the American Lands Council's arguments in court as part of their defense strategy,<sup>92</sup> facilitated by their attorneys, a former Utah state legislator<sup>93</sup> and counsel to the Utah Republican party.<sup>94</sup>

Elected officials will be faced with decisions about public lands management over the coming months, and they will be forced to decide whether they stand with extremists or with the American people who know the economic and intrinsic value of our public lands.



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