

Background and Talking Points on draft Constitutional Amendment

What does the proposed constitutional amendment bill do?

- Starts the process to amend Wyoming's constitution.
- Addresses lands theoretically granted to Wyoming from the federal government after January 1, 2019.
- States that "in accordance with the purposes of the grant," the lands "shall be managed for multiple use and sustained yield, including public access for hunting, fishing and other recreation, as prescribed by the legislature."
- Allows for the exchange of these lands, but says the exchanges can "collectively cause no more than a de minimis loss or gain" of the lands, "either in value or size."
- The exchanges must maintain or increase public access.

What's wrong with the bill?

- The proposed amendment lays a foundation for taking over public lands and sends a dangerous message to Congress, saying that Wyoming is ready to take these lands.
- Contrary to what you might hear the proponents say, there is nothing in the bill that would prohibit sale of our public lands, once acquired by the state! The minor language about loss of land and value only applies to exchanges.
- There are many loopholes in the language of the bill and uncertainties. For example, "multiple use" and "sustained yield" and even "public access" might have very different interpretations in the future because of the caveat "as prescribed by the legislature."
- The amendment is in direct opposition to our current Wyoming constitution in Article 21, Section 26, which disavows all title to these federal lands.

Why else should we oppose this effort?

- The proposed amendment is just another in a long line of land transfer bills that the Wyoming public has consistently opposed. It is not needed, nor is it "protecting" our public access as the proponents claim. We just need to say **NO** to land transfer and keep our public lands public for our access and for future generations.
- The legislature's own Study on the Management of Public Lands concluded that there were better and more practical ways to improve local voice in public lands management and that state management of federal lands was not cost effective for Wyoming.
- This is a divisive, political distraction that is unproductive for our state now. This issue will polarize the state at a time when we have more important challenges to focus on.

- The proposed constitutional amendment is available at:

<http://legisweb.state.wy.us/interimCommittee/2016/17LSO-0179-0.7.pdf>.

- The recent Study on the Management of Public Lands can be found at:

<http://legisweb.state.wy.us/InterimCommittee/2016/SFR-1109APPENDIXB-2.PDF>