



GOING TO EXTREMES

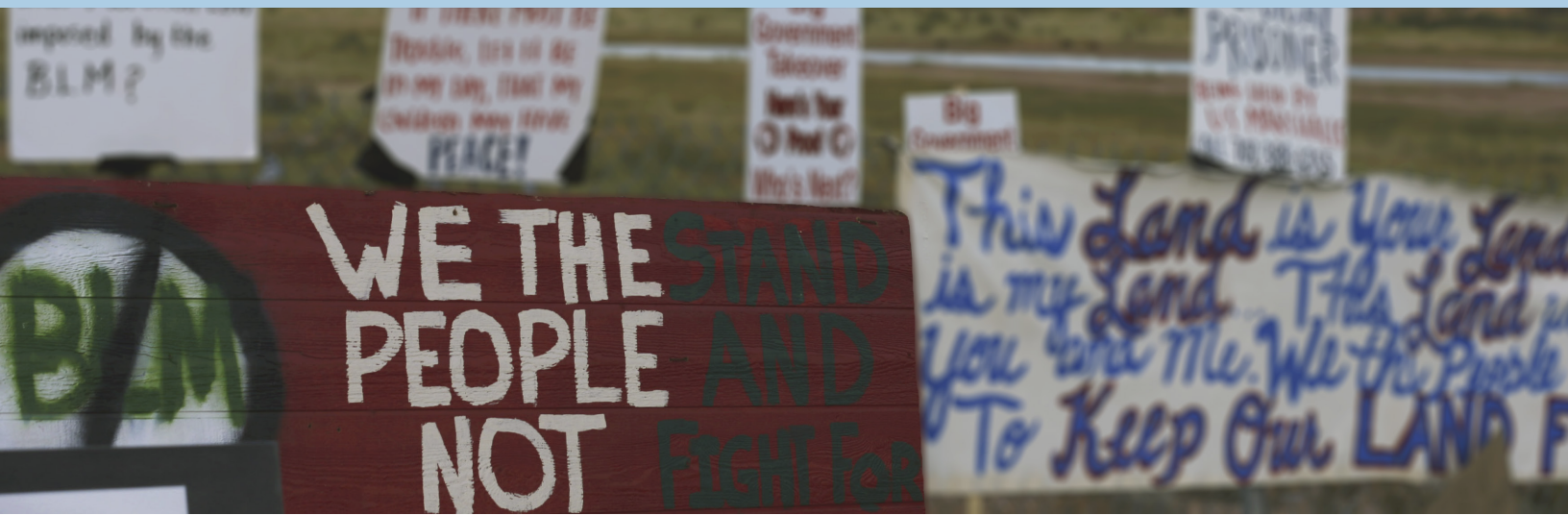
The Anti-Government Extremism Behind the Growing Movement to Seize America's Public Lands

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Center for
Western Priorities

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INTRODUCTION



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

The elected officials supporting state seizure of public lands couch their arguments carefully, using innocuous rhetoric to claim that their only goal is better land management. But in reality, these politicians are following directly in the ideological footsteps of Cliven Bundy, the scofflaw rancher who owes more than \$1 million in grazing fees to American taxpayers and doesn’t recognize the U.S. government as “even existing.”¹

In this report, the Center for Western Priorities examines the extremist origins and foundations of the movement to seize American lands, many of which have not been brought to light before. We describe how public lands issues attract extremists, including members of organizations like the Oath Keepers and the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association. We also show that the underpinnings of the movement are well outside mainstream conservative or federalist thought.

In this report 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 nine out of the eleven Western states whose legislatures considered land transfer bills in the first half of 2015 have direct connections to anti-government ideologies and/or extremist groups that want to see the federal government unraveled or opposed by force.
- **Influencers and echo chamber:** Those making the case for transferring public lands are a small group of conspiracy theorists and questionable academics, including one who wrote the "least credible history book in print." These so-called thought leaders, who include Alex Jones and David Barton, also function as an echo chamber within the radical right.

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

Indeed, the Bundy situation has many of the same foundations as the land transfer movement: a philosophy based in vehement anti-government ideologies, supporters with connections to organizations that espouse armed resistance, pseudo-legal theories used to justify illegal actions, and scholarly support from conspiracy theorists and discredited academics. These associations help explain why land seizure proponents have refused to address major issues with their policy proposal, such as the costs of fighting wildfires and constitutional constraints.

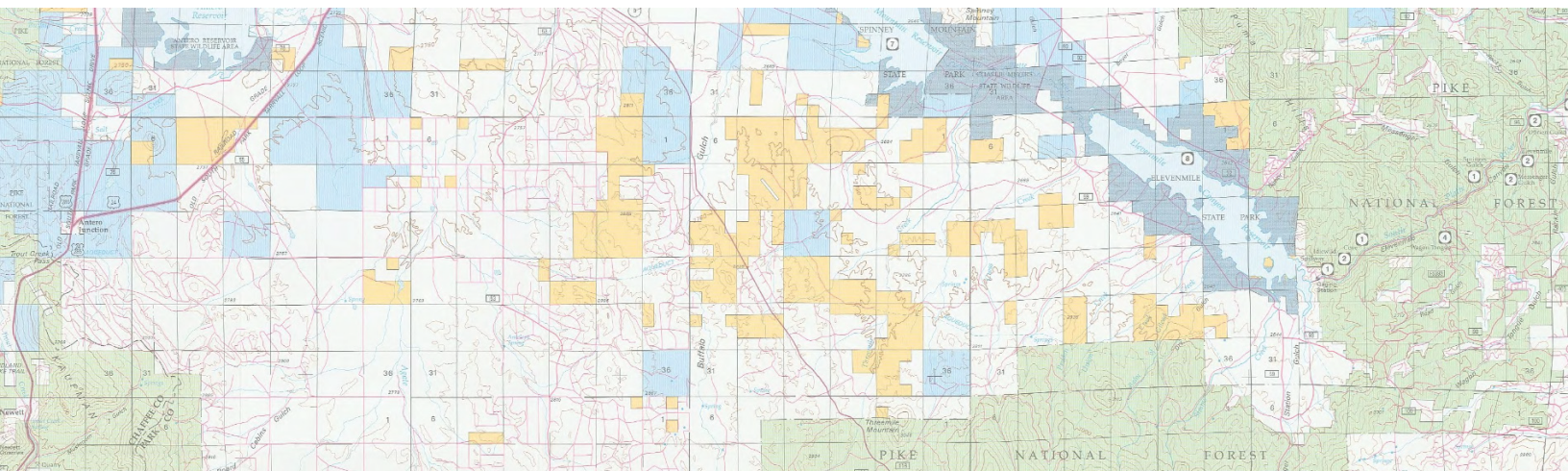
In the end, the crusade to give American public lands away to the states must be seen for what it is: the latest outgrowth of radical anti-government extremism, which mainstream legislators of both political parties should avoid.

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 and local governments.

The state of Utah led the charge by passing a law in 2012 demanding that Congress turn over title to the state’s national public lands or face a lawsuit.² Proponents claim that the federal government agreed to turn public lands over to the states when the states entered the Union. 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.”³ In 2015 Utah legislators nevertheless appropriated \$2 million of taxpayer funds to hire a law firm to explore legal strategies for land seizures.⁴

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,⁵ interstate compacts to coordinate efforts,⁶ and attempts to chip away at federal law enforcement authority on federal public lands by asserting “concurrent jurisdiction.”⁷



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.⁸ Notably, most of the bills that have passed have not demanded a transfer, but instead mandated studies of land management.

Despite these setbacks, land seizure proponents continue to pursue their goals, and have begun targeting the U.S. Congress and presidential candidates.⁹

ANTI-GOVERNMENT AND EXTREMIST GROUPS ARE ATTRACTED TO PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES

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Extremist groups have been on the rise during the Obama administration. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) documented approximately 150 extremist groups in 2008, but more than 1,000 in 2013.¹⁰

In the American West, public lands controversies have been particularly attractive to anti-government advocates. The situation involving rancher Cliven Bundy, who owes U.S. taxpayers \$1 million in grazing fees, is the most prominent example, and 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.¹¹ 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.***¹²

”

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.*¹³

”

Other recent examples of extremist groups getting involved in public lands issues include hard rock miners in Oregon calling in the militia to defend their illegally operating Sugar Pine Mine¹⁴ and “open carry” groups who rallied in Texas against the BLM regarding a dispute with Oklahoma about the border of the Red River.¹⁵

Utah State Representative Ken Ivory, the public leader of the land seizure movement, has put public lands controversies in similarly confrontational terms, telling an extremist group 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.*¹⁶

”

Like supporters of turning public lands over to the states, Cliven Bundy and his admirers 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.*¹⁷

”

The Bundy family also called on its supporters to “swarm” the Nevada state capitol in April 2015 to endorse Nevada State Representative Michele Fiore’s bill asserting that the federal government has no right to lands and waters in the state.¹⁸

But the path leads both ways. At the same time that Bundy has backed fringe theories about public lands, key proponents of land transfers in Western states have been supportive of Bundy and his ideology and violent tactics. This includes Rep. Ivory, who told a news outlet that Bundy “was put in a very untenable situation.”¹⁹ Rep. Ivory also has indicated his support for radicalism by signing the Constitutional Sheriff and Peace Officers Association pledge²⁰ and speaking to the group.²¹ CSPOA is an extremist group led by former Sheriff Richard Mack—who spoke at a Bundy Ranch press conference²²—founded to “advance the principle that sheriffs must resist the government.”²³

EXTREMIST GROUPS RECENTLY INVOLVED IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES



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.



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....”



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.



AGENDA 21 CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

WHAT THEY BELIEVE: Radical conspiracy theorists believe that Agenda 21, a non-binding 1992 United Nations resolution that promotes sustainable development, is “a key step in [a secret plan to destroy property rights](#), redistribute wealth and, ultimately, force the United States and other countries in a tyrannical, one-world government.” The *High Country News* reports that anti-Agenda 21 activists are “increasingly influential” in the West and have “[sabotaged planning](#) efforts nationwide.”

INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES: Alex Jones, a leading conspiracy theorist, connected Agenda 21 to public lands, stating that the Bureau of Land Management has “an [obsession to grab more](#) [land] so that the dictates of Agenda 21 can be implemented.”



COUNCIL OF CONSERVATIVE CITIZENS

WHAT THEY BELIEVE: This [white supremacist group](#) came under scrutiny after its tenets were [cited](#) by the man who killed nine black South Carolinians in June 2015.

INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS ISSUES: A post on the CoCC website [indicated support](#) for the anti-government protestors at the Bundy Ranch, stating that “The people of Nevada are being denied the right to graze cattle, drill wells, or mine for raw materials.... By keeping the land under Federal government, the Federal government use mining rights as a reward for political allies and punish political enemies.” The CoCC website also [highlighted](#) the land seizure issue.

THE EXTREMIST IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: POSSE COMITATUS AND COUNTY SUPREMACY

Cliven Bundy summarized the extremist viewpoints of anti-government radicals when he stated that he doesn't "recognize the United States government as even existing."²⁴ 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."²⁵

In the West, the extremist "County Supremacy" philosophy and its forerunner, the Posse Comitatus movement, are major ideological underpinnings of the land seizure movement. A number of legislative proponents subscribe to these philosophies. 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 integration in 1958.²⁶ 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.*²⁷

”

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.

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.²⁸ The ideology adapted into both the sovereign citizens and the militia movements of the 1990s and 2000s.²⁹ 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.³⁰

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 that he owes to U.S. taxpayers, but has refused to pay on the grounds that the land belongs to the state, not the federal government.³¹

Additionally, Posse Comitatus members were involved in the shootings of law enforcement officials outside of New Orleans in 2012,³² and Colorado State Senator Ken Lambert invoked the ideology when speaking in defense of a bill to undermine public lands management.³³

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.³⁴ The SPLC notes that “today’s militias...and county supremacy movement” are “absolutely inseparable” from the concepts of the Posse Comitatus movement.³⁵

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.³⁶

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.”³⁷

LAND SEIZURE PROPONENTS WITH EXTREMIST TIES



Aaron Preciado
Still from YouTube video HD- Assemblywoman
Michele Fiore @ Cliven Bundy Press Conf. 4/14/14

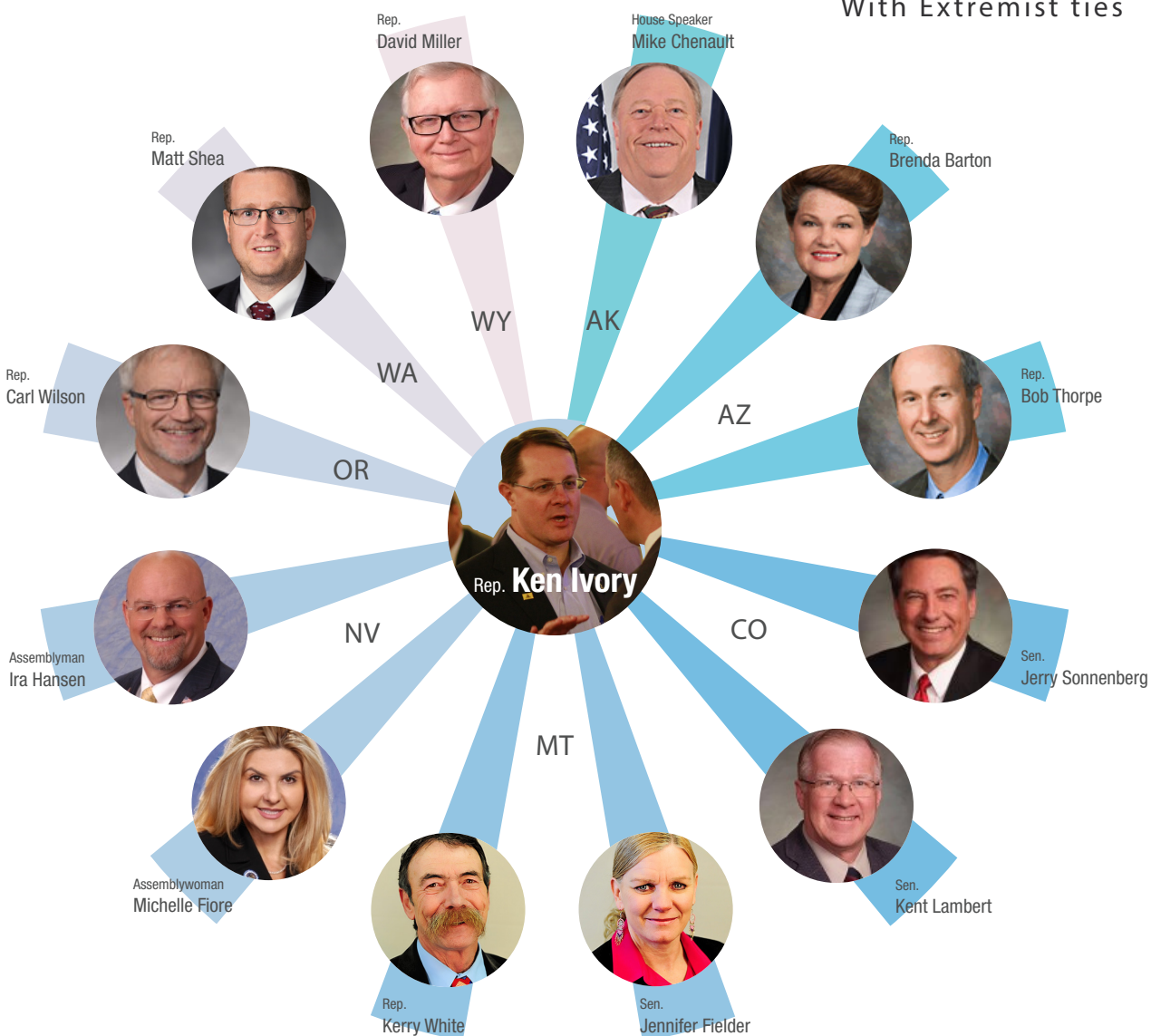
Many of the Western state legislators who have introduced land seizure bills are directly linked to the extremist groups or subscribe to the anti-government ideologies discussed above.

The most prominent is Utah State Representative Ken Ivory. Like other anti-government advocates, Rep. Ivory uses complicated but erroneous legal theories to support the notion that the federal government has no right to public lands. For example, he claims that the federal government promised to “transfer the land back” to the states,³⁸ but legal experts maintain that he has extensively misinterpreted the law.³⁹

Rep. Ivory has also directly endorsed the philosophy of County Supremacy by signing a resolution authored by the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, an extremist group led by Sheriff Richard Mack founded to “advance the principle that sheriffs must resist the government.”⁴⁰ The resolution 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,⁴¹ which reflects the governing principles of county supremacy.

Rep. Ivory is not the only legislator who supports giving away public lands and is deeply connected to extremist ideologies or groups. Indeed, our analysis shows that in nine out of the eleven Western states that saw land transfer proposals in the 2015 legislative sessions, proponents had ties to or indicated support for extremist groups or ideologies. Many have made inflammatory statements about our government. 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	<p>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, <i>“Tragedy is not a license for federal encroachment on constitutionally protected freedoms.”</i></p>
Arizona	Representative Brenda Barton House Bill 2321 House Bill 2318 House Bill 2658 House Concurrent Memorial 2005	<p>During the 2013 federal government shutdown, Barton called on <i>“constitutional sheriffs”</i> to revoke the authority of National Park Service rangers who she referred to as <i>“thugs.”</i> She also referred to Sheriff Richard Mack, leader of the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, as <i>“my friend Richie Mack”</i> and asked her Facebook followers whether they have <i>“...considered asking your county elected sheriff if they are considering revoking the arrest powers ... to federal agents operating within their county?”</i> She has also compared President Obama to Adolf Hitler.</p>
	Representative Bob Thorpe House Bill 2318	<p>Thorpe called President Obama a <i>“rodeo clown”</i> and later sponsored legislation to nullify executive orders. He said, <i>“We’re telling the president...that if he provides an executive order, it doesn’t apply to the state of Arizona.”</i> During a hearing on legislation to ban Agenda 21 in Arizona, Thorpe told supporters, <i>“...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.”</i> Thorpe also traveled to the Bundy Ranch.</p>
Colorado	State Senator Jerry Sonnenberg House Bill 1322	<p>Sonnenberg supported 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.</p>
	State Senator Kent Lambert Senate Bill 39	<p>During debate on a bill to chip away at federal law enforcement authority on public lands, Lambert invoked <i>“Posse Comitatus,”</i> claiming the ideology is <i>“what is at stake here.”</i></p>

STATE	LEGISLATOR & LAND SEIZURE BILL SUPPORTED	EXTREMIST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND RHETORIC
Montana	<p>State Senator Jennifer Fielder Senate Bill 215 Senate Bill 274 Senate Bill 298 Senate Bill 348</p>	<p>Fielder is a member of the Sanders Natural Resource Council. According to public records, SNRC is run by members of the Militia of Montana including John Trochmann, who has “white supremacist leanings.” The Oath Keepers referred to Fielder as ‘an excellent source’ on their website.</p>
	<p>State Representative Kerry White House Bill 169</p>	<p>Political observers have described White as a supporter of the County Supremacy movement. White indicated on a questionnaire that he would support authorizing local law enforcement to arrest federal officials implementing the Affordable Care Act in Montana. He planned to join the Bundy Ranch standoff, stating that it was about “government control over people’s lives.” White also spoke at an event about Agenda 21.</p>
Nevada	<p>Assemblywoman Michelle Fiore Assembly Bill 408</p>	<p>Fiore attended a rally in support of Cliven Bundy where she swore the Oath Keepers oath. The Council of Conservative Citizens’ highlighted her participation in the rally on its website in April 2014. After receiving criticism for her bill asserting that the government has no right to lands or waters, she amended it to endorse the sovereignty of sheriffs. Fiore has a long history of making inflammatory remarks, including advocating for guns on campuses by stating that “the sexual assaults that are occurring would go down once these sexual predators get a bullet in their head.”</p>
	<p>Assemblyman Ira Hansen Senate Joint Resolution 1</p>	<p>Hansen lost his leadership role in the Nevada Assembly in 2014 after his racist statements came to light, including 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 touted the Confederate flag in his office, which he hung “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.</p>

STATE	LEGISLATOR & LAND SEIZURE BILL SUPPORTED	EXTREMIST AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY AND RHETORIC
Oregon	Representative Carl Wilson Senate Joint Memorial 7	Wilson was praised by the Oath Keepers for standing with miners breaking the law at the Sugar Pine Mine. He was a cosponsor of a public land giveaway bill from State Senator Kim Thatcher, who spoke at an “I Will Not Comply” rally opposing gun background checks along with Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes.
Utah	Representative Ken Ivory House Bill 148	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.
Washington	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.
Wyoming	Representative David Miller House Bill 209	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. Miller was also the sponsor of an anti-Agenda 21 bill in the 2015 Wyoming legislative session.

THE EXTREMIST TIES OF THE LAND SEIZURE MOVEMENT

In **nine out of the eleven Western states** that saw land seizure proposals in 2015 legislative sessions, proponents had ties to extremist groups or ideologies. These legislators include, but aren't limited to:

AK

AZ

CO

MT

NV

OR

UT

WA

WY



House Speaker
Mike Chenault



- **County supremacist**



Rep.
Brenda Barton



- **Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association** supporter



Sen.
Jerry Sonnenberg



- **Colorado secessionist**



Rep.
Kerry White



- **Agenda 21** conspiracy theorist
- **County supremacist**



Assemblyman
Ira Hansen



- **Bundy Ranch** supporter
- **County supremacist**



Rep.
Carl Wilson



- **Oath Keepers** supporter



Rep.
Ken Ivory



- Coordinates land seizure efforts across the West
- Signed resolution from the **Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association**



Rep.
Matt Shea



- **Oath Keepers** supporter
- **Bundy Ranch** supporter
- **Agenda 21** conspiracy theorist
- Signed resolution from the **Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association**



Rep.
David Miller



- **Agenda 21** conspiracy theorist
- **County supremacist**



Rep.
Bob Thorpe



- **Agenda 21** conspiracy theorist
- **Bundy Ranch** supporter
- **County supremacist**



Sen.
Kent Lambert



- Invoked "**Posse Comitatus**" while defending a land seizure bill



Sen.
Jennifer Fielder



- Connected to the **Militia of Montana** through the Sanders Natural Resource Council



Assemblywoman
Michelle Fiore



- **Oath Keeper**
- **Bundy Ranch** supporter
- **County supremacist**

THE INFLUENCERS AND ECHO CHAMBER

Utah State Representative Ken Ivory has relied upon a number of discredited experts and conspiracy theorists to design and promote the convoluted legal and historical justification for his 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,
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DAVID BARTON

Barton is a discredited historian who authored the “least credible history book in print,”⁴² which was eventually recalled by the publisher because the “basic truths just were not there.”⁴³ 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 1859.⁴⁴

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!”⁴⁵ Rep. Ivory also appeared on Barton’s WallBuilders radio show at least four times to promote public land seizures.⁴⁶



Sean P. Anderson,
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ALEX JONES

Jones hosts the talk show and website “Infowars,”⁴⁷ and has been called “the most prolific conspiracy theorist in contemporary America.”⁴⁸ 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.”⁴⁹ Jones recently gained fame for fueling the Jade Helm conspiracy theory in Texas.⁵⁰

Jones has thrown his support behind Rep. Ivory, hosting him on his show in January 2015 to discuss public lands.⁵¹ 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.”



Gage Skidmore,
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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*.⁵² A 2010 poll noted that Beck is “the most highly regarded individual among Tea Party supporters” and is perceived to be an “educator.”⁵³ Beck is known for his controversial statements, such as saying that President Obama has “a deep-seated hatred for white people.”⁵⁴ 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.”⁵⁵

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.”⁵⁶



Samantha Bare,
Cronkite News

DOYEL SHAMLEY

Shamley is the CEO of Veritas Research Consulting,⁵⁷ and has multiple times appeared “as an expert witness on land management.”⁵⁸ Shamley is also a conspiracy theorist who once hosted an online radio show called *The Hour of the Time*, a “podcast devoted to exposing the New World Order’s attack on America.”⁵⁹ Shamley has also been involved with⁶⁰ the extremist anti-Agenda 21 group *Defend Rural America*.⁶¹

Rep. Ivory appears aligned with Doyel Shamley, as evidenced by his posting one of Shamley’s videos on the American Lands Council Facebook page and calling it a “must watch for those who want to understand what the EPA is doing to our rural communities.”⁶² And Montana State Senator Jennifer Fielder—the leading proponent of land transfers in the state—invited Shamley⁶³ to testify at a hearing on the subject in front of the state’s Environmental Quality Council.⁶⁴

REP. KEN IVORY & THE AMERICAN LANDS COUNCIL: THE BRIDGE FROM THE EXTREME TO THE MAINSTREAM



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, who functions as the highly effective bridge between the extreme and the mainstream.

On one hand, in his role as an activist and president 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,"⁶⁵ David Barton's "Wall Builders,"⁶⁶ and Alex Jones' conspiracy theory talk radio show.⁶⁷ Rep. Ivory also directly visits patriot and extremist groups. For example, he addressed Montana's Sanders Natural Resources Council in December 2013,⁶⁸ a group which has been directly linked to the Militia of Montana.⁶⁹ He also spoke to the Colorado Mesa County Patriots in April 2013,⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹

On the other hand, in his capacity as an elected official and figurehead of the land seizure movement, Rep. Ivory has 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,⁷² Senator Rand Paul stated in June 2015 that he would “either sell or turn over all the land management to the states,”⁷³ and Rick Santorum called for public lands to be transferred to state control in 2012.⁷⁴ Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker sat down with Rep. Ivory in July 2015.
- ◆ 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.⁷⁵
- ◆ The “Federal Lands Action Group” was created by Utah Representatives Chris Stewart and Rob Bishop in April 2015 to “develop a legislative framework for transferring public lands to local ownership and control.”⁷⁶
- ◆ Multiple bills have been introduced or moved through Congress that support giving away or selling off public lands.⁷⁷
- ◆ The Republican National Committee endorsed “the imminent transfer of public lands to all willing western states” in its 2014 official platform.⁷⁸



Ken Ivory @KenIvoryUT · 25 Apr 2014

W @SenTedCruz & @SenatorFielder re #TransferPublicLands.



SIDE BY SIDE: REP. IVORY 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 ranch 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 with discredited historian David Barton and Montana State Sen. Jennifer Fielder, who is linked to the Militia of Montana.

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 speaking at the Pro Family Legislators Conference, where Rep. Ivory presented on state jurisdiction.

Ken Ivory @KenIvoryUT · Jul 31
Honor to be named national legislator of the year. [#utpol](#).



► In 2014, the American Legislative Exchange Council, which has advocated for land seizure legislation, named Rep. Ivory the national legislator of the year.

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 via @youtube #utpol #utleg
@AmericanLandsCn

YouTube



▶ U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski has 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.



American Lands Council shared Ken Ivory's photo.
July 23 at 2:41pm ·

Meeting with Governor Scott Walker on the only solution big enough to halt the environmental devastation on our forests and rangelands and to grow our economy - the transfer of public lands.



Ken Ivory

Meeting with Governor Scott Walker on the only solution big enough to halt the environmental devastation on our forests and rangelands and to grow our economy - the transfer of public lands.

▶ Rep. Ivory meeting with Governor Scott Walker to discuss the seizure of national public lands.



Utah Rep Fights Federal Land Grab



The Alex Jones Channel
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▶ 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 203

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."

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 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.

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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