



## Ted Cruz Promises Nevada He'll Get Its Land Back

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Republican presidential candidate Sen. Ted Cruz promised Nevada voters he will transfer control of federally-held lands back to the states if he's elected.

"If you trust me with your vote," Cruz says in a new ad revealed Thursday. "I will fight day and night to return full control of Nevada's lands to its rightful owners, its citizens." Cruz criticizes fellow GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump for his reluctance to champion state control of federal land.

The ad begins by lamenting the fact that the federal government currently controls 85 percent of the land in Nevada, including the Lake Mead National Recreation Area on the Colorado River, Great Basin National Park, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and Basin and Range National Monument.

Conservationists have criticized such transfer proposals in the past, calling them financially irresponsible and terrible for the environment.

"I can't help but think that if Theodore Roosevelt could see the current scam being peddled to American sportsmen he'd be fighting mad," wrote Field & Stream editorial director Anthony Licata last year.

He added: "Simply put, state treasuries cannot afford to manage these lands ... These game-rich areas that currently belong to all of us will be developed or sold to large corporations, degrading critical habitat and locking out millions of sportsmen."

Such criticisms are unfounded, proponents of state control of land say, because the expense would not be more than that borne by the federal government.

Chris Edwards, director of federal and state tax policy studies at the Cato Institute, told The Daily Caller News Foundation Cruz's views regarding state ownership of public land is notable.

There's no reason to believe state governments can't more efficiently control their own land, he told TheDCNF.

"To say that state governments could not afford to manage federal lands is nonsense. Indeed, state governments generally manage their own grazing, timber, and recreational lands to earn a positive net return for taxpayers," Edwards said.

He added: "By contrast, federal land is so poorly managed it loses money for taxpayers. So transferring land from the federal to state governments would be a win-win as land would be better managed and taxpayers would gain."

It's just as expensive for the federal government to use the National Park Service to wrangle more land under federal control, press secretary for House Committee on Natural Resources Elise Daniel said Friday.

"The Park Service is falling behind about \$300 million annually on deferred maintenance and the total backlog among all land-management agencies is around \$20 billion – yet the Obama Administration keeps trying to acquire more land," Daniel told TheDCNF's Andrew Follett.

Most of the candidates jockeying for the GOP presidential nomination share Cruz's sentiments.

Ohio Gov. John Kasich's presidential campaign is promoting an ad promising Kasich will transfer land management back to Nevada from Washington, D.C., and assures Nevada's conservative voters that "John Kasich says this land should be your land."

In January, as a militia was holding up a wildlife facility in Oregon for land management purposes, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio echoed Cruz and Kasich's sentiments during an interview with the Des Moines Register's editorial board.

"I most certainly believe that the federal government controls far too much land in the Western parts of the United States especially," he said. "The state of Nevada is an example — it's almost entirely owned by the federal government. And it goes well beyond the legitimate need of land ownership for defense purposes, for example."

The White House classified three new national monuments earlier this month, all of which are located in California's desert.

The designations of the Mojave Trails National Monument, Sand to Snow National Monument and Castle Mountains National Monument, according to the White House website, appropriate nearly 1.8 million acres of desert sand underneath the yoke of federal rule.