



April 5, 2005

The Honorable Chris Cannon  
United States House of Representatives  
118 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cannon:

On behalf of the 350,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I write in strong support of your bill, H.R. 1370, the Federal Land Asset Inventory Reform (FLAIR) Act. This bill would require the federal government to undertake an inventory of all of its federal land holdings and more importantly, the bill stipulates that once the inventory is completed, the data will be used to improve federal land management and sell off federal lands where appropriate.

Amazingly, since the federal government is unable to tell exactly how much land it owns, the federal government can only estimate its land holdings (approximately 670 million acres). Worse, the government is often unable to tell exactly *what* land it owns, how it is being used, and whether it is being used effectively.

The sheer size of the federal government's land holdings makes the issue of land ownership incredibly important for taxpayers. Because it owns 86 percent of Nevada, nearly two-thirds of all land in Utah, and an estimated 51.9 percent of land throughout the West as a whole, federal management practices can have a tremendous impact not only on the economies of western states, but on the national economy as well.

To ensure that the federal government is using the land it owns in the most cost-effective, taxpayer friendly manner possible, your important legislation requires the Secretary of the Interior to identify property that is no longer needed by the federal government and how much taxpayers would gain through its sale. In addition, the FLAIR Act requires the Secretary to use contracts with the private sector to the maximum extent possible, and it ensures that land owned for duplicative purposes be sold.

Simply put, it is clear that the federal government owns far too much land that it cannot properly manage. Although NTU and its members would prefer that vast tracts of land be sold unless they are absolutely essential for national security, your bill is a positive step forward in determining what land the federal government actually needs and how land can be put to more cost-effective purposes.

NTU looks forward to working with you on this critical issue. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Gessing  
Director of Government Affairs