

Sponsor Statement for HJR 48

Termination of Federal Land Withdrawals

“Relating to federal land withdrawals.”

This House Joint Resolution encourages Congress to amend the public lands laws of the United States to provide a timely means of returning previously withdrawn public lands to fuller use.

Throughout much of the United States, especially the Western States and Alaska, the federal government has withdrawn land for various reasons. Withdrawn lands are then off limits to other selections and designations, e.g. State’s right-of-way, State selection, mining claims, Native allotments, etc. Many federal withdrawals were for public purposes such as parks and refuges; others were withdrawn to give agencies the flexibility to consider proposed uses of the land; and still others have been withdrawn for seeming arbitrary political purposes. When federal land is withdrawn it is closed until the withdrawal is removed which in some instances requires an act of Congress. This creates the problem where land remains closed to entry even when the original purpose for the withdrawal has been accomplished or has lapsed.

In Alaska many of these federally withdrawn lands have been selected by the State of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Statehood Act for transfer to become State-owned lands. Some of these lands in withdrawal status have high mineral potential. Other lands were selected for access corridors. In all cases, these State selected lands cannot be transferred, and Alaska loses opportunities.

HJR 48 requests that Congress amend our country’s public lands laws so that the land withdrawals sunset in 10 years unless the agency responsible for managing the land provides Congress with a justification.

HJR 48 also requests that Congress require the federal land managing agencies to compile a comprehensive listing of the withdrawn lands under their jurisdictions to include (1) the exact geographical coordinates of the withdrawals, (2) the legal authority for the withdrawal, (3) the document establishing the withdrawal, and (4) the proposed disposition of the affected land and file a plan with Congress within one year defining how the withdrawals will be terminated. This requirement would extend to all agencies of the United States that manage public lands, as many departments and agencies are involved in land management, e.g. The Post Office, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Services, the Fish and Wildlife Service, etc.

The Alaska State Legislature urges Congress to amend the current public lands laws as [HJR 48](#) provides.