

NEWS RELEASE

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Creation Justice Ministries Raises Concerns About Public Lands Initiative

A Faithful Way Forward Must Respect Official Tribal Leadership

As Committee chairman of the US House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Rob Bishop (UT-1) has facilitated the markup and passage of his bill, H.R., 5780, Utah Public Lands Initiative Act, through the committee today. This Public Lands Initiative (PLI) focuses on public lands measures across seven counties in eastern Utah, including the management of 1.4 million acres in southeast Utah surrounding an area known as Bears Ears.

This recent development has raised concern among religious communities, which have vigorously supported the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition's national monument proposal to protect 1.9 million acres. Religious community support has been shown through [commissioning and publicizing a poll, issuing religious leader public statements, and releasing a letter signed by 14 top U.S. religious leaders](#). Religious communities are supporting the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition's national monument proposal because of the historic collaboration among tribes to manage their shared sacred and ancestral lands. This Coalition is comprised of the officially appointed representatives of five sovereign tribal nations: the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, Ute Mountain Ute, and Uintah Ouray Ute. The Coalition does not believe their proposal was ever integrated, or taken seriously, in the Public Lands Initiative process.

What is also troubling is Rep. Bishop's media strategy to promote his Public Lands Initiative, in which he knowingly portrays individual Native Americans who oppose the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition's national monument proposal as if these individuals represent all of the region's Native Americans. This tactic is misleading to the general public.

Creation Justice Ministries Executive Director Shantha Ready Alonso said of the Public Land's Initiative's advancement out of the House Natural Resources Committee, "Faith communities know our nation needs the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition's spiritual wisdom about sacred lands, and we respect their conservation leadership. I urge Congress to carefully compare and contrast the Coalition's plan with the Public Lands Initiative, and notice the important differences. Upon evaluation, I hope you will agree with the broad and diverse coalition supporting the Bears Ears National Monument proposal that President Obama should designate it this year using the Antiquities Act."

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Creation Justice Ministries represents the creation care policies of 38 Christian communions, including Baptist conventions, mainline Protestants, Historically Black Churches, Peace Churches, and Orthodox communions. Learn more at www.creationjustice.org