Herrell has collected over $100,000 from taxpayers for her personal expenses, including for cross-country travel to attend lavish conferences in Washington DC hosted by a "corporate-backed lobbying organization." And after attending those conferences, Yvette Herrell pushed the "corporate-backed lobbying" organization's agenda in New Mexico -- leading the charge to sell off New Mexico's public lands decreasing access for all. With Herrell, it’s cuts for us and perks for her.

Herrell Received $96,102.34 In Mileage And Per Diem For Legislative Work And $4,206.07 In Additional Expenses To Attend ALEC Events, Totaling $103,308.41.

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Herrell Regularly Attended ALEC’s Annual Multi-Day SNPS Conference In Washington, D.C.

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Herrell Regularly Attended ALEC’s Annual Multi-Day SNPS Conference In Washington, D.C.

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[New Mexico Legislative Council Service, 6/15/18]
ALEC Was A “Conservative, Corporate-Backed Lobbying Organization” Supported By The Koch Brothers. [Think Progress, 7/12/18; The Hill, 7/12/18]

2013: Herrell Co-Sponsored Legislation Proposing The Transfer Of Millions Of Acres Of Federal Public Lands To New Mexico. “Federal public lands: In what has to be one of the most ambitious and longest-shot bills introduced so far this session, Rep. Yvette Herrell, R-Alamogordo, and Sen. Richard C. Martinez, D-Espacola, are co-sponsoring HB 292, which proposes transferring millions of acres of federal public lands -- Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands -- within New Mexico to the state.” The bill was not voted on in the House. [Las Cruces Sun-News, 1/29/13; HB 292, 2013 Regular Session, accessed 6/8/18]

The Bill Would Exclude National Parks And Monuments And Lands Held In Trust For Tribes And Pueblos. “The bill excludes national parks and monuments, wilderness areas and lands held in trust for tribes and pueblos. It would establish a task force to oversee the land transfer and outlines the division of funds from selling any of the public land. The bill specifically protects the ‘rights, claims or privileges of New Mexico’s historic land grants.’ ” [Las Cruces Sun-News, 1/29/13]

NOTE: Please see primary source #1 for “20130129 Las Cruces Sun-News”

Herrell’s Bill Was Supported By ALEC. “This movement advocating for the transfer of western public lands began in Utah in 2012. Utah State Representative Ken Ivory introduced and Governor Gary Herbert signed into law HB148— ‘Transfer of Public Lands Act’—which has subsequently become ALEC model policy for other state legislators to use as an example. Since the movement began in Utah, legislation has been popping up across the country: […] New Mexico introduced a bill (HB292) that would have created a Public Lands Transfer Task Force which would have defined public lands to be transferred from the federal government to the state and developed a mechanism for the transfer of federal public land to the state.” [American Legislative Exchange Council, 6/6/13]

Herrell: “New Mexicans Deserve Better Than The Land Management We Are Currently Getting From The Federal Government.” “I am happy to blaze this trail along with other states in the west,’ Herrell said. ‘New Mexicans deserve better than the land management we are currently getting from the federal government.’ ” [Ruidoso News, 1/31/13]

NOTE: Please see primary source #2 for “20130131 Ruidoso News”

Herrell Said “We Are Currently Not Getting The Full Use Of The Land That Could Be Available.” “Herrell, the co-sponsor of HB 292, said in a press statement that, in the past, Otero County had a thriving timber industry that is now near non-existent. ‘We have been fortunate to have vast expanses of land that can be utilized by New Mexicans to help feed their families and enrich their communities,’ she said. ‘However, we are currently not getting the full use of the land that could be available. Instead, we are paying a management fee to the federal government in order to allow them to make the rules on how our land is used.’ ” [Carlsbad Current-Argus, 2/7/13]

NOTE: Please see primary source #3 for “20130207 Carlsbad Current-Argus”

Herrell: “New Mexicans Deserve Better Than The Land Management We Are Currently Getting From The Federal Government.” “Herrell said five other Western states are looking at similar legislation. ‘I am happy to blaze this trail along with other states in the west,’ Herrell said. ‘New Mexicans deserve better than the land management we are currently getting from the federal government.’” [Ruidoso News via NMFLC Blogspot, 1/31/13]
Herrell: “We Can Bring In 100 Percent Of Revenues From Oil, Gas, Timber And Other Industries From This Land Instead Of The Less Than 50 Percent That We Currently Keep.” “Herrell said the transfer of national forest and BLM lands to the state would also provide revenues to New Mexico’s coffers instead of the feds. ‘If we follow suit with other states that have done exactly what I am proposing, we can bring in 100 percent of revenues from oil, gas, timber and other industries from this land instead of the less than 50 percent that we currently keep. Doing so will allow us to put more money into our education system to ensure that the children of New Mexico get the education that they deserve.’” [Ruidoso News via NMFLC Blogspot, 1/31/13]

Herrell: “In My Home Of Otero County, We Would Greatly Benefit From This Act As It Has The Potential To Allow For A Renewal Of The Timber Industry.” “In my home of Otero County, we would greatly benefit from this act as it has the potential to allow for a renewal of the timber industry,” Herrell said. ‘A healthy timber industry, managed responsibly by New Mexicans, would not only help our economy by creating a large number of jobs, but it would also help to protect our watersheds and keep our forests as livable habitat for all wildlife. Additionally, by responsibly thinning our overgrown forests, we can help decrease the devastation of wildfires. As it is currently, the federal government has logging restrictions that keep our forests overgrown, creating a hazardous environment. When a fire starts, the overgrowth serves as kindling, creating a massive forest fire that threatens the safety of our homes and communities.”’ [Ruidoso News via NMFLC Blogspot, 1/31/13]

2015: Herrell Proposed Legislation That Would Create A Commission To Study The Possibility Of Transferring Federal Land To The State, State And Federal Land To Tribes, And State And Federal Land To Land Grants. “HB 291, by Rep. Yvette Herrell, R-Alamogordo, would create a 17-member commission to study the possibility of transferring federal land to the state, state and federal land to tribes, and state and federal land to land grants. The commission would also study possible land exchanges between federal and state governments. The bill seeks $100,000 to fund the study.” The bill passed out of committee but was not voted on in the full House. [Gallup Independent, 2/12/15; House Bill 291, 52nd Legislature 1st Session, introduced 2/3/15]

New Mexico’s Tribes Were All Opposed To The Study. “Opponents argued that the proposition is unconstitutional and that the state lacks the resources to manage any more land. The state’s tribes are all opposed to the study, citing their concerns about their longstanding relationships with the federal government.” [Gallup Independent, 2/12/15]

NOTE: Please see primary source #4 for “20150212 Gallup Independent”

Herrell Claimed The State Was Missing Out On Revenues Because Of Federal Control Of Public Lands. “In 2015, New Mexico state lawmakers proposed legislation to create an investigative committee to weigh the costs and benefits of transferring federal lands to the state. Yvette Herrell, R-Otero, who co-sponsored the bill, which later died in the House, said it would ‘behoove’ the state to thoroughly examine the idea. She hopes to reintroduce the legislation during the 2017 session. ‘I personally feel that the money we would save, in terms of return on investment and repaying royalties to the federal government [from oil and gas], those numbers alone are staggering,’ Herrell said. […] ‘We are missing out on revenues,’ Herrell said. ‘People are getting frustrated.’ ” [Santa Fe New Mexican, 1/11/16]

New Mexico’s State Owned Land Was Part Of Public Trust And The Income From Land Leases And Revenues Went Towards Schools, Hospitals, And Other Public Institutions. “Herrell said royalties could better be spent on infrastructure, education and the timber industry. New Mexico’s state-owned lands are part of a public trust, and as such, the income from state land
leases and revenues are funneled toward schools, hospitals and other public institutions.” [Santa Fe New Mexican, 1/11/16]

**Herrell Introduced A Bill Related To The Transfer Of Federal Lands Every Year From 2011 To 2015.** “According to Gay, Herrell has introduced land transfer bills the last three years and is planning to introduce another one this year, but so far has not done so.” [Los Alamos Monitor, 1/31/15]

NOTE: Please see primary source #5 for “20150131 Los Alamos Monitor”

After The 2015 Legislative Session, Herrell Did Not Introduce Legislation Related To The Transfer Of Federal Lands. According to a search of Herrell’s sponsored legislation, after the 2015 legislative session she did not introduce legislation specifically related to the transfer of federal lands. [New Mexico Legislature, Sponsor search, accessed 7/18/18]

2014: Herrell Introduced A Bill For A Task Force To Study The Transfer Of Federal Lands Back To New Mexico. “Rep. Yvette Herrell from Otero County again put forth a bill to create a task force to study the idea of federal lands being transferred back to New Mexico.” [Ruidoso News, 2/27/14]

NOTE: Please see primary source #6 for “20130227 Carlsbad Current-Argus”

**ProgressNow Said The Bill Was “Straight Out Of The ALEC Handbook.”** “Rep. Yvette Herrell’s (R) HB 102, ‘Creating the Transfer of Public Lands Task Force’ is straight out of the ALEC handbook for rookie legislators. HB102 recommends a task force to study the transfer of federal public lands to the state and designates appointment authority to the task force to ensure a Republican super-majority of members in a state with a majority Democratic registration and Democratic-controlled legislature.” [ProgressNowNM, 2/3/14]
Firearm bill tabled: The House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee tabled a bill that would prohibit the enforcement of proposed federal firearms laws in the state, with a 3-2 vote Tuesday evening.

House Bill 114, sponsored by Rep. Nora Espinoza, R-Roswell, was attacked by the three Democratic members of the committee, chiefly Chairman Rep. Eliseo Lee Alcon, D-Milan, who is a Vietnam veteran. "I cannot believe that such a bill was written," Alcon said at one point. He later apologized to Espinoza.

The two members of the committee who voted to pass the legislation, Rep. Thomas Anderson, R-Albuquerque, and Jason Harper, R-Rio Rancho, argued that the bill was a way to protect the federal and state constitutions. Several members of the audience, including veterans and law-enforcement officers, supported the bill.

"The reason I brought this forward is not because I bear arms," Espinoza said. "It's because I do not want the government infringing on any of my rights."

Avoiding embarrassment: Freshman Sen. Mark Moores, R-Albuquerque, took a beating when he presented his first bill Tuesday before the Senate Public Affairs Committee.

His Senate Bill 89 calls for the state to adopt a policy that would prevent any political subdivision from naming a publicly funded building after a living person. But senators on both sides of the aisle balked at the idea that the legislation would take away local control. Committee members voted to hold over the bill for future hearings with proposed amendments.

The bill wouldn't affect buildings that are already named, Moores said, but is aimed at making sure future buildings are named for an individual only after their "historical body of work" is acknowledged. Moores said he's trying to prevent incidents that are "embarrassing."

"We can actually let history take a look at what their work for their entire career has been instead of just naming buildings after current living people who might end up in prison some day or causing some embarrassment to us, and then we have to take their name off the building," Moores said.

Former Sen. Manny Aragon, a former Democratic leader who is serving a federal prison sentence for his role in a kickback scheme, was never mentioned during the hearing, but his name was removed from a tower at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque after he was convicted of fraud.

Sunday eye-openers: New Mexico restaurants and taverns could boost their business, and could be more competitive with those in neighboring states, if they were allowed to serve alcoholic beverages beginning at 10 a.m. Sundays rather than noon, as state law currently permits.

That's the reasoning offered by Sen. John Ryan, R-Albuquerque, for his SB 154. "We have a lot of tourists from all over the world who come here expecting to have champagne with their Sunday brunch, only to find alcoholic beverages can't be served until noon," he said in a news release. "The sports bars which cater to the sports enthusiasts who want to watch Sunday football games are not able to serve their patrons until noon."
Ryan noted the NFL cable and satellite TV packages that some bars purchase to lure early customers on Sundays, though alcohol can't be served until noon. He also argues that tourists who come to the state for the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta and for snow skiing might be more likely to spend more money if his bill becomes law.

Federal public lands: In what has to be one of the most ambitious and longest-shot bills introduced so far this session, Rep. Yvette Herrell, R-Alamogordo, and Sen. Richard C. Martinez, D-Espacola, are co-sponsoring HB 292, which proposes transferring millions of acres of federal public lands -- Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands -- within New Mexico to the state.

The bill excludes national parks and monuments, wilderness areas and lands held in trust for tribes and pueblos. It would establish a task force to oversee the land transfer and outlines the division of funds from selling any of the public land. The bill specifically protects the "rights, claims or privileges of New Mexico's historic land grants."

Horse slaughter: The House Agriculture and Water Resources Committee on Wednesday is scheduled to consider HB 90 and House Joint Memorial 16 to study opening a horse slaughter facility in New Mexico. The bills are sponsored by Rep. Paul Bandy, R-Aztec. HB 90 seeks $20,000 to fund a study through New Mexico State University.

A proposed private horse slaughter facility in Roswell met heated resistance last year. But advocates of a slaughter facility, including some horse owners, say without a process to "humanely" kill horses, the number of unwanted and neglected equines will continue to skyrocket.

Memorial highway: Sen. Carlos Cisneros, D-Questa, is sponsoring a memorial requesting that a portion of U.S. 285 between Nambc and Espacola be named in honor of the late House Speaker Ben Lujcn of Nambc.

Senate Joint Memorial 18 would ask the state Transportation Commission to call that section of federal highway the Ben Lujcn Memorial Highway.

Lujcn, who was elected to the Legislature in 1974 and held Democratic leadership positions for nearly 30 years, died in December after a long battle with lung cancer.

San-Juan Chama troubles: Rep. Carl Trujillo, D-Santa Fe, is promoting HJM 24, which would ask New Mexico's congressional delegation for help establishing a federal water task force.

Ongoing drought could mean a substantial decline in water available to Santa Fe, Albuquerque and others who rely on Colorado River Basin water delivered to the Rio Grande via the San Juan-Chama project.

The dramatic decline in precipitation the last few years also means an increase in wildfires and flooding could ruin part of the extensive San Juan-Chama infrastructure of pipelines, tunnels and diversions. A federal task force could assess the risks to this critical New Mexico water infrastructure and recommend the best methods for protecting it.

Human trafficking: A bill proposing more severe penalties for human traffickers passed unanimously in the House Consumer and Public Affairs Committee on Tuesday. HB 121, proposed by Rep. Tim Lewis, R-Rio Rancho, is now on its way to the House Judiciary Committee. HB 121 makes human trafficking a second-degree felony. Under current law, it is a third-degree felony. And if the victim is under the age of 16, the crime would become a first degree-felony.
Looking ahead
Sen. Mary Kay Papen, D-Las Cruces, the newly elected Senate president pro tem, will be Lorene Mills' guest this week on Report from Santa Fe, which airs at 8 a.m. Sunday on KNME Channel 5.1. out of Albuquerque, 6 p.m. Saturday on KENW Channel 3 in Portales and 6 a.m. Sunday on KRWG Channel 22 in Las Cruces. The program also airs on Albuquerque radio station KANW-FM, 89.1., at 9:30 a.m. Monday.
The New Mexico Green Chamber of Commerce, which advocates for renewable energy, local small businesses and innovative business practices, will be highlighting a number of its priorities -- such as a tax credit to buyers of newly built energy-efficient homes -- when it holds its second annual Legislative Action Day on Wednesday.

Quote of the day
"Back in high school we all had fake IDs." -- Santa Fe Police Chief Ray Rael, commenting on problems with driver's license fraud during a House Labor Committee debate on HB 132, which would have repealed a 2003 law that allows undocumented immigrants to be issued driver's licenses. The committee voted to table the bill, which could be a lethal blow to the legislation.

Days remaining in session: 45
2. NM legislation to take federal lands
   Ruidoso News (New Mexico)
   By: Jim Kalvelage
   January 31, 2013

Legislation that would move the ownership and management of U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands in New Mexico to the state has been introduced at the Roundhouse.


In a prepared statement, Herrell said New Mexico has a rich history of farming, ranching, hunting, fishing and oil drilling.

"In our past we have also had a thriving timber industry that is unfortunately near nonexistent," Herrell said. "We have been fortunate to have vast expanses of land that can be utilized by New Mexicans to help feed their families and enrich their communities. However, we are currently not getting the full use of the land that could be available. Instead, we are paying a management fee to the federal government in order to allow them to make the rules on how our land is used."

The legislation, introduced on Monday, would exclude national parks, national historic parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, and tribal lands. The bill calls on the U.S. Government to extinguish title to the public lands and transfer title to the state on or before Dec. 31, 2015.

"In my home of Otero County, we would greatly benefit from this act as it has the potential to allow for a renewal of the timber industry," Herrell said. "A healthy timber industry, managed responsibly by New Mexicans, would not only help our economy by creating a large number of jobs, but it would also help to protect our watersheds and keep our forests as livable habitat for all wildlife. Additionally, by responsibly thinning our overgrown forests, we can help decrease the devastation of wildfires. As it is currently, the federal government has logging restrictions that keep our forests overgrown, creating a hazardous environment. When a fire starts, the overgrowth serves as kindling, creating a massive forest fire that threatens the safety of our homes and communities."

Herrell said it is time to put an end to the wildland fire danger.

The legislation is similar to the Transfer of Public Lands Act enacted last year in Utah. But an analysis by the Utah Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel cautioned lawmakers and the governor that the act would interfere with Congress' power to dispose of public lands. The review noted that any attempt by Utah to enforce the requirement would have a high probability of being declared unconstitutional.

Staff in the New Mexico Attorney General's Office normally reviews proposed legislation.
"This bill does not show up on our public records site yet," Phil Sisneros, director of communications for the AG's office said Thursday. "That means either it is still being reviewed or it has not come to us for analysis."

The New Mexico Transfer of Public Lands measure would establish a public lands transfer task force to facilitate the transfer of the federal lands to the state. The task force would also establish a prioritized list of management actions to in part preserve and promote the state's interest in protecting public health and safety, preventing catastrophic wildfire and forest insect infestation, preserving watersheds, preserving
and enhancing energy and the production of minerals, preserving and improving range conditions, and increasing plant diversity and reducing invasive weeds.

Herrell said the transfer of national forest and BLM lands to the state would also provide revenues to New Mexico's coffers instead of the feds.

"If we follow suit with other states that have done exactly what I am proposing, we can bring in 100 percent of revenues from oil, gas, timber and other industries from this land instead of the less than 50 percent that we currently keep. Doing so will allow us to put more money into our education system to ensure that the children of New Mexico get the education that they deserve."

Herrell pointed to a study done for the Otero County Commission by the Southwest Center for Resource Analysis. She said the report indicated lands currently managed by the BLM and U.S. Forest Service generates more than $500 million in annual revenues for the federal government.

A Fiscal Impact Report for House Bill 292 had not been completed. Legislative Finance Committee staff analyst Mary McCoy said the report would likely be finalized on the day the bill is scheduled to be heard by its first committee, the Agriculture and Water Resources Committee. Rep. Zach Cook, R-Ruidoso, is a member of the committee. A date for a hearing had not been scheduled as of Thursday. Herrell said five other Western states are looking at similar legislation.

"I am happy to blaze this trail along with other states in the west," Herrell said. "New Mexicans deserve better than the land management we are currently getting from the federal government."
3. Bill would move New Mexico's federal lands into state custody

Carlsbad Current-Argus (New Mexico)
By Stella Davis
February 7, 2013

Legislation that would move ownership and management of the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management lands in New Mexico has been sent to the House Agriculture and Water Resources Committee for study.

House Bill 292 - The New Mexico Transfer of Public Lands - was introduced by Rep. Yvette Herrell, R-Alamogordo, and Sen. Richard C. Martinez, D-Espanola, and calls on the U.S. government to extinguish title to public lands and transfers title to the state of New Mexico on or before Dec. 31, 2015. The legislation would exclude national parks and monuments, national historic parks, wilderness areas and tribal lands.

Within Eddy County's borders, there are 1.6 million acres of federal land and 577,225 acres of state land. Private land totals 470,148 acres. Eddy County Commissioner Jack Volpato said he supports the bill and it is "wonderful and long overdue." The bill, he said, is similar to the Transfer of Public Lands Act enacted last year in Utah.

He said the transfer of public federal lands should have happened decades ago.

"Look at the states east of the Mississippi. They have very little or no federal lands. The western states where there is a lot of federal land are being short-changed by the federal government," he said.

Volpato said at first glance, he was unsure about the proposed legislation. However, he said after reading it and educating himself on the issue he believes the bill would benefit Eddy County and New Mexico.

He said under the present system, Eddy County receives about $3 million in "Payment in Lieu of Taxes," a federal program that compensates counties for the non-taxable federal lands. However, although the county would lose that revenue, which helps fund its two road departments, he said having the lands in state ownership would in the long run benefit the county financially.

"The way we function now, all oil and gas revenue on Bureau of Land Management lands goes to the feds and they kick back about 50 percent to the state. In turn, the state sends us (Eddy County) about 10 percent of the oil and gas revenue," Volpato said. "In essence, we are losing money by not being stewards of our land. This legislation would benefit our state immensely. If we are the stewards of our lands and natural resources, those dollars being sent to the federal government and squandered, would go to the state and local governments.

"I was concerned at first because we would be losing $3 million in PILT funding. But after educating myself I think this is something we should support. The whole state should be behind this. If this bill passed, it would mean money for not only local governments, but for our schools and higher education."

Volpato said if the federal lands were under state ownership, another benefit would be not having to deal with federal agencies on issues such as endangered species and other federal land issues.

In recent years, Otero County Commissioners and other community leaders from Alamogordo have come before previous Eddy County Commissions to garner support for the transfer of federal lands to state control. But the Eddy County Commissioners rejected such proposals and would not throw their support behind them.
Herrell, the co-sponsor of HB 292, said in a press statement that, in the past, Otero County had a thriving timber industry that is now near non-existent.

"We have been fortunate to have vast expanses of land that can be utilized by New Mexicans to help feed their families and enrich their communities," she said. "However, we are currently not getting the full use of the land that could be available. Instead, we are paying a management fee to the federal government in order to allow them to make the rules on how our land is used."

She said Otero County would greatly benefit from HB 292, as it has the potential to allow for a renewal of the timber industry. Rep. Cathrynn Brown, R-Eddy, who serves on the House Agriculture and Water Resource Committee, said although the bill has been sent to the committee, it has not been scheduled to be heard.

However, like Volpato, she believes New Mexico should be allowed to manage its own lands and resources and reap the financial benefits. Brown said although she believes the proposed legislation would be good for the state if it passed, she is doing her homework to determine the full impact of a federal land transfer to the state.

"I know a lot of western states are looking at doing this," she said. "But we need to look at all sides of the issue."

Brown said with the federal government managing a large portion of land within New Mexico, it can take it and sell without state approval. "The state lands were to be held in trust. The state would like to be in the driver's seat and be in charge of our destiny. It would give us fairer access to our natural resources and provide significant funds for our schools," Brown said.

Herrell said to her knowledge, five western states are looking at similar legislation.

"I am happy to blaze this trail along with other states in the west," she said. "New Mexicans deserve better than the land management we are currently getting from the federal government."

Sen. Carroll Leavell, R-Lea and Eddy, says he supports the state taking all the BLM lands within New Mexico's borders, but not Forest Service Land. "When you compare neighboring Texas to New Mexico, there is a huge difference between the states. They don't have federal lands and oil and gas revenues don't go to the federal government," Leavell said. "Also, if the state were to take all the federal land, I would like to see some of that land become private some time in the future. Private landowners pay taxes on the land they own and that's where the revenue is."
4. Tribes oppose changes in land management
The Gallup Independent (New Mexico)
By Sherry Robinson
February 12, 2015

SANTA FE -- A bill to study federal management of public lands ignited more than two hours of debate Wednesday, but a House committee approved it on a nonpartisan 9-to-1 vote.

HB 291, by Rep. Yvette Herrell, R-Alamogordo, would create a 17-member commission to study the possibility of transferring federal land to the state, state and federal land to tribes, and state and federal land to land grants. The commission would also study possible land exchanges between federal and state governments. The bill seeks $100,000 to fund the study.

Opponents argued that the proposition is unconstitutional and that the state lacks the resources to manage any more land.

The state's tribes are all opposed to the study, citing their concerns about their longstanding relationships with the federal government.

Gov. Fred Vallo, of Acoma Pueblo, said the bill "raises questions about federal protection of cultural properties or sacred sites. It allows a commission to determine which public lands will transfer to the state. The motivation of the bill is troubling - it simply allows the sale of public lands to private interests for extraction."

He added that Acoma has sacred sites, shrines and trails on public lands, and the tribe would lose access. The proposed land transfer "presumes the state is the better steward. We don't believe this is true. Our historical and spiritual connection to these lands has never been extinguished."

Max Trujillo, of Sportsmen Concerned in Las Vegas, said well funded studies in other states concluded that the state would have to sell land to fund management. "What land will be sold? Whoever buys it will want prime land that citizens use every day. I as an American citizen have ownership. I can't even camp on state land."

The New Mexico Acequia Commission has "heartburn with the Forest Service" over permits required to work on headgates, "but we don't feel this is a solution," said chairman Ralph Vigil. If land is privatized, it could endanger acequia headwaters, he said.

Deborah Haaland, speaking for San Felipe Pueblo, pointed out that there were no Native people on the commission. "It doesn't make sense that you would think about land transfers" and not include tribes in the discussion. Haaland said she personally and the Pueblo adamantly opposed the bill.

Supporters, who are primarily agricultural organizations, complained about federal land management and red tape.

Ernest Torres, of the New Mexico Cattle Growers, said, "In my area, we've seen the land go up in smoke. We're worried about our watershed. The federal government complies, it doesn't manage anything."
The New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau and the New Mexico Wool Growers agree.

Bobby Ortega, deputy State Land Commissioner, said the issue needs study and debate.
"We need to look at how lands are managed in the state. It's a study and nothing more," he said.

Senate President Mary Kay Papen, D-Las Cruces, is carrying the identical bill, SB 483. "I have property in Cloudcroft, and we've watched Cloudcroft burn," she said. "We're not allowed to go in and thin. I think we have a better idea of what we need than the federal government."

Rep. Bobby Trujillo, D-Taos, said he got state funding to build a firehouse in his area, and the Forest Service compliance took so long that time ran out and they lost the funding.

Rep. Rick Little, presenting the bill to the committee, said, "We're not trying to privatize New Mexico."

Rep. Bill McCamley, D-Las Cruces, was the only committee member to vote against the bill.
Sportsmen protest state's land bid; Legislature Opponents say move would limit access, cost taxpayers
Los Alamos Monitor (New Mexico)
By Arin McKenna
January 31, 2015

More than 250 public lands users showed up for a rally at the Roundhouse Thursday to protest continued efforts to transfer federal public lands to the State of New Mexico.

"We had people there yesterday representing the horseback trail riders, mountain bikers, dirt bikers, the motocross types, ATV and OHV types, hikers, campers, canoers, the Adobe Whitewater Club was there," said Joel Gay, communications director for the New Mexico Wildlife Federation. Gay noted it was the largest sportsmen's rally anyone could remember.

At stake are 9 million acres of national forest and 13 million acres of Bureau of Land Management land that proponents are trying to claim for the state.

The most recent iteration of this effort is Senate Memorial 6, introduced by Sen. Pat Woods (R-District 7). SM 6 calls for the Department of Finance and Administration to "convene stakeholders to study and make recommendations on federal land management and ownership and evaluate federal revenue streams' impacts on the state, local governments and community economies."

"We're opposed to even studying this idea. Other states have studied this and it is a bad idea for sportsmen. It's a bad idea for every public land user," Gay said. "These lands that some would like the state to acquire are lands that belong to all Americans. They do not belong to individual states to do with as they will. So this affects a lot more than just sportsmen."

Three pieces of legislation calling for the transfer of federal lands to state jurisdiction were introduced in 2013. Those include SB 404 -- also introduced by Woods -- and HB 262, introduced by Rep. Yvette Herrell (R-District 51) and Sen. Richard Martinez (D-District 5, Los Alamos, Rio Arriba, Sandoval and Santa Fe), both titled the "Transfer of Public Lands Act."

SM 93 was also introduced in 2013 by Sen. William Sharer (R-District 1). The memorial calls for the transfer of federal lands to the state under the guise of providing a solution to the problem of inadequate funding for early childhood education.

According to Gay, Herrell has introduced land transfer bills the last three years and is planning to introduce another one this year, but so far has not done so.

In a press release put out by Backcountry Hunters & Anglers and the New Mexico Wildlife Federation, NMWF Director Garrett VeneKlasen states "New Mexico hunters and anglers have been using our national forests and other federal public lands for generations. They are OUR lands, OUR ranch, and we strongly oppose these efforts to transfer these lands to individual states.

VeneKlasen goes on to say in the press release, "this risky, reckless gambit is a slippery slope leading to more fences and more 'no trespassing' signs. This rally will give sportsmen and women a chance to tell our decision-makers: Keep your hands off our public lands."

Los Alamos Open Space Specialist Craig Martin agrees with VeneKlasen.
According to Martin, approximately 60 miles of county trails could be affected by such legislation.

"When I walk my dog, I use county trails. But when I go for an adventure on the weekend, it's always on national forest land around here," Martin said.

The reasons given for demanding federal land transfers revolve around arguments that the state could generate more income from those lands. Royalties from such things as oil and gas revenues are currently split between the state and the federal government.

However, such arguments do not take into account such things as the costs of managing those lands, income generated by federal employment within the state or income generated by tourism involving those public lands.

"Right now, our public lands here in New Mexico and all over the west, the financial burden is shared by all Americans," Gay said. "The benefit is shared by all Americans. And they want all the revenues to come to New Mexico and all the burden to come to New Mexico."

Tom Ribe, longtime Jemez Mountain/Bandelier activist and native Los Alamosian, agrees.

"There's no way New Mexico could afford to manage all the federal lands in New Mexico. The State couldn't possibly do it. It just would be way too expensive for them," he said.

Ribe cites firefighting as one of the most prohibitive costs, noting that the cost of suppressing the Las Conchas fire was $40.9 million.

"Firefighting these fires is vastly expensive, both to deal with them in the short term and also the rehabilitation afterward is also very expensive," Ribe said. "Right now, all the firefighters that fight anything except small fires on private land in New Mexico are provided by the federal government...New Mexico could never provide the firefighting equipment or the crews needed to fight anything more than small fires."

According to Ribe, subsidized grazing on federal lands is another issue. Ranchers are able to graze cattle on federal public lands for $1.35 a head. Studies conducted at the Valles Caldera National Preserve to determine the actual cost of grazing cattle set the break even cost at approximately $7 a head, with the help of state subsidies.

Ribe estimates the actual cost is approximately $10 a head, similar to that charged on private lands.

"These are income support programs that provide money for rural communities by allowing cows to be grazed on forest service lands at a huge cost to the federal government," Ribe said.

He contends the state would either have to continue those subsidies or risk the wrath of ranchers, many of whom feel those lands are rightfully theirs as Spanish land grant heirs.

Ribe also said that New Mexico has been overgrazed and over-logged for the last 100 years and there is little money to be made from either of those ventures. He also fears the impact of losing protections such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other legislation protecting federal lands if the state were to gain control.

According to Gay, studies conducted in other states support Ribe's contentions about the financial issues.
Gay cited a study in Idaho that found that logging would have to be ramped up from 150 million board feet a year to a billion board feet a year, or the state could lose $100 million in management costs.

Another study cited by Gay was conducted in Utah. It found that the state would have to raise oil and gas royalties from 12.5 percent to 16.7 percent to break even.

That study also noted the need to raise grazing fees to cover costs and that firefighting expenditures would likely increase annual state wildfire-related spending by $76.7 million, approximately six times current state expenditures.

A Nevada study found that the state would have to sell a significant percentage of the land up front in order to pay for management costs.

Opponents also contend that such legislation is unconstitutional.

The New Mexico Constitution reads, "The people inhabiting this state do agree and declare that they forever disclaim all right and title to the unappropriated and un-granted public lands lying within the boundaries thereof..."

The U.S. Supreme Court has also ruled that the U.S. Constitution invests Congress with the power to dispose of and regulate public lands.

Gay's fear is that this type of legislation, if passed, could have a domino effect. In his worst case scenario, Republicans could someday hold both houses of Congress and the presidency, and would use legislation passed by the states as an argument for passing legislation to cede public lands to the states.

Some opponents say land transfer legislation also has questionable origins, with possible ties to groups such as the American Legislative Exchange Council, an advocacy group largely funded by Charles and David Koch.
The 30-day New Mexico legislative session has just ended, so it is a good time to update you on bills important to our county and other local issues. Funding for hospitals: Medicaid, indigent and uncompensated care

The federal Sole Community Provider program has gone away and the governor expanded Medicaid eligibility in New Mexico. A new system is in place, but the question of how to fund the "local New Mexico" match in order to obtain federal funding was a huge issue in the Legislature. Various funding mechanisms were put forward from having the counties come up with the match to splitting the match three ways among counties, state and hospitals. The counties, hospitals and Department of Human Services (DHS) worked together and this is what the Legislature passed:

Counties will pay an equivalent of 1/12th-cent gross receipts tax (GRT) to the fund annually. For Lincoln County, this amount will be approximately $330,000. Counties have the option of where this money comes from. For Lincoln County it could come out of our existing 1/8th GRT for indigent care, or out of our dedicated 2.6 mil levy on property taxes or from general funds.

The county funds will go directly to the DHS, be pooled with all monies and matched with federal funds. The Department of Human Services will then send back to hospitals what they feel is appropriate funding.

The state will come up with $9 million towards the fund. Hospitals will contribute an additional amount. The county will also still contribute $300,000 to the state for the Medicaid program. This comes out of our 2.6 mil levy that supports our hospital and clinics.

This funding process does not preclude counties from supplementing the amount received back from the state with more local dollars. Transfer of federal lands back to New Mexico

Rep. Yvette Herrell from Otero County again put forth a bill to create a task force to study the idea of federal lands being transferred back to New Mexico. Although she had reached out to many interested parties and adjusted the task force, the bill did not make it out of the Health, Government and Indian Affairs Committee. Three other bills dealing with the same issue also did not make it out of committee. One bill in particular, sponsored by the Senate Leader Michael Sanchez was supported by the Commissioner of Public Lands and would have budgeted $250,000 to study just taking back "disposable" Bureau of Land Management properties.

This issue is still critical to New Mexico and we are lagging behind other western states that are already studying the concept. An annual report from the federal Office of Natural Resources Revenue shows the federal government generating $1 billion from all federal lands in New Mexico. The data is there to determine if the transfer would be feasible and economical for New Mexico. This year, I will be working with Repr. Herrell and several others, along with the American Lands Council, to advance the issue in New Mexico. For more information, visit www.AmericanLandsCouncil.org.

I have also purchased four autographed copies of the book, Sagebrush Rebel, (Reagan's Battle with Environmental Extremists and Why it Matters Today), written by William Perry Pendley, for our four county libraries. If you want to know how President Reagan transferred the lands back, check it out at your local library. Property tax exemptions
The following is from our Lincoln County Assessor Paul Baca, pbaca@lincolncountynm.gov, (575) 648-2306, ext. 125. There are property tax exemptions for property in Lincoln County.

There is a family exemption of $2,000 off of the taxable amount of value for the owner of a piece of property with a residence on the property should this be the owner's primary residence.

There is also a low income exemption if you own your home and are a resident. To qualify for the low income exemption, your total household income cannot exceed $32,000 and you must be over the age of 65 or disabled. This exemption will freeze your value but not necessarily your taxes as tax rates fluctuate from year to year. Should your value not increase, but the tax rate increases, you will see a tax increase but not as large as if your value also increased.

There is also a veteran's exemption which is worth a total of $4,000 off of the taxable amount of your property. You may qualify for all three.

There is also a 100 percent disabled veterans' exemption that exempts you totally from property tax on a residential piece of property, except for the tax on Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are taxes on property outside municipalities. A veteran must live in his/her residence to benefit from this exemption. Veterans' exemptions need to be approved by the New Mexico Veterans Service Commission. The Assessor's office has applications for these exemptions should you wish to apply.

Applications for the low-income and family exemptions may also be obtained through the Assessor's office. Fire season preparations

Our drought continues and fire season has already started. The local fire departments are all prepared and homeowners should also check their preparations. Review your evacuation plan and defensible space around your house. I am very proud of all the work done by property owners this last year to thin living and remove dead trees (from fire, bugs or drought). You can hear chain saws every day! And thank you for your participation in the "free firewood" program.

I have heard from many citizens over the last year and encourage anyone to contact me if they have an issue, concern or suggestion. My phone is 336-4831 and my email is Kathryn@kathrynminter.com I also have a web page (www.kathrynminter.com). Our county web page (www.lincolncountynm.gov) contains information from each department, from the senior center menus to daily fire danger.