



Arizona Lawmakers Want to Put Public Lands in Private Hands

Alex Trimble Young, Arizona State University-Downtown Phoenix

In April 2014, a long escalating dispute between rancher Cliven Bundy and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over his grazing cattle on federal lands for more than two decades without paying grazing fees became a national spectacle.

It led to a standoff pitting far-right paramilitaries brandishing semiautomatic rifles against law enforcement officers that ended with the BLM backing off its effort to hold Bundy to account.

Bundy's victory against the BLM enlivened the so-called "land transfer movement," a faction of radicals who believe, contrary to established law, that states have a constitutional right to transfer federal lands within their boundaries to state and ultimately private control.

In the years since, this vocal and well-armed minority has extended its influence in the highest echelons of the Republican Party. With national politicians like Utah's Sen. Mike Lee leading the charge, efforts to privatize federal land are being pushed in state legislatures across the West.