

No Midnight Monument Speech

Monday, December 19, 2016

Good afternoon! My name is Mark Whitney, Beaver County Commissioner and current president of the Utah Association of Counties.

To our federal delegation, Governor Herbert, Attorney General Reyes: Thank you for inviting me to represent the counties today in voicing our opposition of the national monument designation of Bears Ears in San Juan County.

We live in a beautiful and amazing country, that affords us the freedom to stand here today and speak out on matters of principle and conscience. We also call this our home – a state that joined the Union nearly 121 years ago, on January 4, 1896. As Utahns, we are proud of our history, our people, and the contributions we make as Americans.

Our welcome mat is out every day, literally to the entire world. The beauties of this State that I have proudly spent my entire life living in, I believe, are unmatched and that's an opinion I share with not only the citizens that counties represent, but with the nearly 25 million people who visit it each year.

We are blessed with resources and an economy that are also the envy of the entire nation, and that make so much of our welcoming and friendly nature as US citizens possible.

However, Utahns have made it abundantly clear that while new residents and visitors are welcome, the designation of Bears Ears or any other area within our borders is completely unwelcome. The counties add our voice in unitedly and adamantly opposing any misuse of power and authority claimed within the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906 to create a monument within our borders.

The counties and the people that live in them are ground zero for the hardship and enormous burden these types of designations create. Over the years, we have witnessed excessive harm to the citizens of Utah as a direct result of monument designations, that ironically have very little to do with preserving this precious land we have so capably proven our ability to guard over.

But more than that, there's something fundamentally wrong when the Executive Office of our country – an office held by one person, one non-Utahn, who has likely never even visited San Juan County – can misuse power, for politically-motivated purposes and without the consent of those who are most affected, to take such an egregious action against the mind and will of an entire state.

It's un-American, it's wrong and we stand united as counties, and in particular with our brothers and sisters in San Juan County, when we plead with the current administration to leave Utah alone – We respectfully ask and declare, Mr. President: No Midnight Monument!

Thank you!