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Joint Statement on Bears Ears National Monument

1 message

LNC Vice Chair Amanda Griffiths <info@lp.org>

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Amanda Griffiths**

Fellow Party members,

**Libertarians stand for self-determination, free exchange, mutualism,
and the honor of good-faith agreements between peaceful people.**

Nor can these values be detached from one another. They are innately intertwined.

This is why I am writing you today, **in tandem with Region 9 Representative Alex Flores**, an outspoken voice for Indigenous rights on the LNC. Alex continues to remind us of the **philosophical heritage libertarians share in common with the First Peoples of this country**—a heritage that, I would argue, binds us to fight alongside them for the principles we hold together.

Today, Alex and I are sharing an update on the latest in a series of federal violations against tribal sovereignty along with a few calls for action and opportunities to get involved.

The Libertarian Party has long condemned the federal government's sequestering of vast tracts of land from the people who live nearest to them and know them best. We are rightly skeptical of systems that delegate to a distant body the power to regulate millions of acres and dictate their use by proclamation. **For this reason, we—as individuals and as a Party—should be outraged and rise to action over what is happening at Bears Ears National Monument.**

In 2016, the federal government made a commitment to five sovereign tribal nations—the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, the Zuni Tribe, the Ute Indian Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe—designating Bears Ears as a national monument. **The first agreement of its kind, the designation created a tribal commission to co-manage the monument,** granting the five tribes an official role in caring for a landscape they had stewarded long before the United States existed.

This was a nation-to-nation arrangement, not a gift—one entered into by both sides and with real obligations attached. **One of these included the duty to consult with the Tribal Commission in the event that any substantive changes to the land were being considered.**

Yet earlier this month—absent any shred of the promised consultation and independent of any act of Congress—**Donald Trump unilaterally reduced the land covered by the monument to the tune of 90 percent, dissolving the Bears Ears Tribal Commission outright.**

No matter our thoughts on the underlying merits of large monument designations—no matter whether we believe the federal government should be involved in such designations at all—**Trump's action constitutes a direct violation of a contract** between the U.S. national government and the individuals of the other nations who share American land. No man should have

the power to destroy a negotiated arrangement between sovereign people by the fiat of a single hand.

This is the sign of an unaccountable government, exercising an authority it was never granted, over people who were never asked.

As libertarians, we believe legitimate authority comes from the consent of the people, not the will of whomever holds a given office. **A federal government that can make a binding promise to a sovereign tribal nation and then break it by the whim of a solitary executive, lacking any means of recourse or mechanism of redress, is precisely the brand of unchecked power our Party fights to overturn.** The tribes who built this agreement in good faith deserve better than to watch it dissolved without a single word.

Protests around Bears Ears are ongoing, and coordinated by the [Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance \(suwa.org\)](https://suwa.org). Alex and I urge all local libertarians to make their voices heard via in-person demonstrations and days of action. **Lawsuits** against the executive order are pending; and **it is in the interest of the Party's dearest principles to consider filing amicus briefs in support of this fight.**

At its July meeting, the Libertarian National Committee unanimously passed a resolution in support of First Peoples, and in defense of their sovereignty in the face of broken promises from the federal government. **This resolution was only the first step** in what we intend to be a series of more direct action and instances of advocacy on behalf of Indigenous rights violated by the state.

The Libertarian Party stands with the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe, the Zuni Tribe, the Ute Indian Tribe, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe in demanding that any changes to how this land is managed happen through the process that was actually promised: real consultation, and the consent of the people of the nations who have stewarded this land the longest.

Help us spread the message further!

Donate Today

In Liberty,

Amanda Griffiths

Vice Chair, National Libertarian Party

Alex Flores

Region 9 Representative, National Libertarian Party

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