

PUBLIC LANDS ENEMY #1



Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah)

U.S. Senate (2011-Present)

Sponsored Bills: 10; **Cosponsored Bills:** 11;

Total Possible Bills: 48

Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Chairman, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining

Member, Subcommittee on Water and Power

Member, Subcommittee on National Parks

Mike Lee, junior senator from Utah, ranks as Public Lands Enemy #1. Lee sponsored or cosponsored 21 of the 48 bills evaluated for this report. Between 2011 and 2016, the senator introduced five bills ([S.A. 3447](#), [S.A. 3023](#), [S.A. 3126](#), [S. 3317](#), [S. 2004](#)) and cosponsored another three ([S. 407](#), [S. 228](#), [S. 1182](#)) aimed at taking away the president's authority to designate new national monuments. Two of these (S. 3317 and S. 1182) eliminate that power specifically within Utah.

Showing his dislike for federal oversight of public lands and his penchant for state control and extractive uses, Lee also sponsored [S. 2473](#), which prohibits the designation of national forests, national parks, national wildlife refuges, national wild and scenic rivers, national trails and wildernesses unless there is state legislative approval. His 2011 and 2015 bills, [S. 635](#) and [S. 361](#), required that the secretary of the interior put up certain public lands for sale.

In 2016 the lawmaker introduced an amendment ([S.A. 3022](#)) that would have stricken language permanently reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a bedrock federal conservation program that provides environmental mitigation by using offshore drilling revenues for the acquisition of land for conservation purposes. Lee offered an amendment ([S.A. 71](#)) to a bill to push through the Keystone XL pipeline that would have made it easier for oil and gas companies to obtain permits to drill on public land. Over his political career, the oil and gas industry has been Lee's #5 supporter, donating [\\$293,420](#) to his political campaigns.

Many of Lee's anti-government beliefs are tied to the [extreme interpretation of the U.S. Constitution](#) espoused by W. Cleon Skousen. This radical, religiously steeped doctrine posits that many functions of the federal government are unconstitutional⁷ — including enforcing environmental regulations, owning large amounts public lands, and establishing wildernesses, national forests, and national parks. Paul Skousen, Cleon Skousen's son, illustrated how deeply Senator Lee is tied to these beliefs, saying, "Mike Lee is a good friend of the family, and we support him 100 percent...He's read Dad's books; he had Dad in his home when he was growing up for visits and dinners, and he met Dad on a number of occasions before Dad passed away."⁸

In addition to federal land ownership, Lee thinks that states should take over federal authority for [child labor laws](#), [disaster relief](#), [Senate appointments](#), domestic [violence](#), [healthcare](#), and [food safety](#).

⁷ J. A. (2011). THE TEA PARTY'S CONSTITUTION. *Denver University Law Review*, 88(3), 559-576.

⁸ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/28/magazine/28FOB-idealab-t.html>

Anti-Public Lands Bills Sponsored or Cosponsored by Lee:

Bill Type	Sponsored	Cosponsored
Land Seizure Sale of Western Land (S. 635) Sale of Western Land (S. 361)	X X	
Private/County/State Control of Public Lands State Oil and Gas Control (S. 490)		X
Weakening Federal Protections Easier Applications for Permits to Drill (S.A. 71) No Permanent Re-authorization of LWCF (S.A. 3022) Weakens Grazing Management (S. 258) Weakens Grazing Management (S. 1129) Remove Wilderness Management (S. 1087) Escalante Monument Grazing Levels (S. 365) No More Uranium Withdrawal (S. 1690) Oil and Gas Leasing Increase (S. 1027)	X X	X X X X X X
No More Parks, Monuments, Refuges No New Monuments Rider (S.A. 3447) No New Monuments Rider (S.A. 3023) No New Monuments Rider (S.A. 3126) No New Monuments in Utah (S. 3317) No New Monuments (S. 2004) State Approval of Land Designations (S. 2473) No New Monuments (S. 407) No New Monuments (S. 228) No New Monuments in Utah (S. 1182) No Water for Monuments (S. 1416)	X X X X X X	X X X X

Campaign Contributors ([2016 Election](#), as of December 2016, source: Center for Responsive Politics):

- Oil & Gas Industry:
 - \$227,520
- Energy & Natural Resources Sector⁹:
 - \$381,700
- Major Funders (In Lee’s Top 100 Contributors, 2016 Election):
 - **Oil & Gas:** Chevron Corp. (\$23,800), Halliburton Co. (\$13,100), Valero Energy (\$12,500), Exxon Mobil (\$10,500)
 - **Coal:** Murray Energy (\$19,895)
 - **Conglomerates:** Koch Industries (\$40,800)

League of Conservation Voters National Environmental Scorecard:

[Lifetime](#): 10 percent

⁹ The Energy & Natural Resources Sector includes: Oil & Gas, Natural Gas Pipelines, Mining, Coal Mining, Alternative Energy Production & Services, Electric Utilities, and Waste Management.