

Statement of Stevan Edward Pearce
Nominee for the Position of Director of the Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
Before the United States Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
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Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich, for your leadership on this committee.

I'm deeply grateful for the support of my friends and family who are with us today or watching on C-Span. I especially want to recognize my strong and amazing wife, Cynthia, our daughter Lori, her husband Craig, our grandson Preston, his wife Erin and our granddaughter Olivia.

I am honored to be nominated by President Trump to serve as the Director of the Bureau of Land Management. Growing up in a large family on a small 5-acre New Mexico farm, the concept of preserving and conserving the land and water was instilled in me through necessity and it was refined by the training I received in 4-H.

During my years at New Mexico State University, I worked every holiday and summer in the oil field to pay for college. In my junior year, I won the draft lottery and got free flying lessons and an all-expense paid trip to Vietnam. After graduation I went straight to USAF pilot training. My first assignment was flying combat missions in Vietnam in 1971, 72 and 73 where I earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and multiple Air Medals and developed a love for veterans and aviation.

In 2016, while still a member of Congress, I flew my single engine, 4-seat Mooney aircraft, solo, circumnavigating the globe in 15 days, dedicating the effort to the warriors who never made it home. I continue to fly and work for veterans today.

When I got back from Vietnam, I experienced the healing serenity of backpacking in wilderness areas.

In 1981, I married Cynthia and together we bought a small, struggling oil field service business and for 14 years, I learned the art of repairing problem oil wells – we were plumbers working 5,000 feet deep.

Running a small business fit well with the values with which I was raised – work hard, treat others fairly and provide good customer service. We sold the business in 2003.

I served seven terms representing the 2nd District of New Mexico, a majority-minority district, which was 34% registered Republicans. The district was 70,000 square miles, larger than the state of Florida, with about 1/3 of the state being federal land.

The 2nd district provided many examples of what multiple use means. Hunting, access and outdoor sports are drivers of one local economy. In another area oil and gas provide the jobs, yet

another has national parks and monuments. The district had mining, grazing, forests, wildfires, wilderness areas and was home to Native American pueblos, tribes and chapter houses.

Much of my life is a life of service, and I am proud of that. During my 14 years as a congressman, I traveled the district extensively, seeing firsthand the problems faced by my constituents who, like my parents, work hard every day trying to provide for their families.

I also saw what the Founding Fathers feared: a federal government acting as an absentee landlord which, instead of partnering with states and local communities, rules over them.

After a devastating wildfire, the Forest Service assigned local ranchers in my district to grazing lands as far away as Wyoming. The cost of trucking cattle that distance would have led to the extinction of small ranchers and collapse of the local economy. My staff identified nearby allotments that had not been grazed for years and lobbied the Forest Service to open those. The agency initially stood its ground but ultimately could not dispute the facts. The ranchers and the local economy survived.

I was gratified to include funding in the appropriations process to clean out the sediment threatening the health of the Blue Hole of Santa Rosa, a popular recreational spring in the New Mexico desert. We got word shortly after that the agency repurposed these funds. I am proud of my efforts to claw the funds back to clean out the spring for future generations.

These examples show my distinct dedication to working with local stakeholders and the federal government to ensure our land managers are making decisions based on local input and in accordance with the law. If confirmed, I fully intend to uphold these same principles as BLM Director and ensure local input is a key factor in my decision-making.

I have also seen first-hand the importance of our public lands and support those missions completely. I met many of the dedicated public servants who make the federal agencies work and together we accomplished some amazing things.

When the Lesser Prairie Chicken was at risk of being listed as endangered, my office worked with ALL stakeholders to establish a voluntary process to increase habitat and prevent a listing. I believe we can duplicate those efforts to solve not only endangered species but orphan wells, abandoned mines and many other issues, including providing clean and plentiful water.

President Trump has proven we can achieve his vision of Energy dominance while preserving clean air, water and soil.

We must preserve the natural spaces so all people have access to the spiritual beauty of the outdoors, where hunting and fishing can be passed down from one generation to the next, where critical minerals can be developed, freeing us from dependence on China. Native American lands and resources can be protected.

The security and economic health of the country, especially the western states, rests squarely on the shoulders of the BLM. We can and must balance the different uses of public lands. Local economies and future generations depend on us doing our job right.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.