

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on National Parks & Public Lands

---

### Statement

---

**TESTIMONY OFFERED BY COMMISSIONER TIM PERKINS,  
LINCOLN COUNTY, NEVADA COMMISSION  
IN SUPPORT OF H.R.2752,  
THE LINCOLN LANDS IMPROVEMENT ACT  
OFFERED BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SUB-COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS  
JULY 13, 2000**

MR. CHAIRMAN and members of the Committee thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Tim Perkins. I serve as a member of the Lincoln County, Nevada Commission and am honored to have the opportunity to offer testimony before your Committee in favor of H.R.2752, the Lincoln Lands Improvement Act.

Lincoln County is a small rural county located in southeastern Nevada. Our population is approximately 4000. Our economic base is primarily agricultural, and our economy is small. Our people live in several towns scattered across the 10,132 square miles of our county. Lincoln County is larger in size than Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined but over 98% of my county is publicly owned, primarily by the federal government. Less than 2% of Lincoln County is privately owned and on our tax rolls. Tax revenues in Lincoln County amount to slightly more than \$1 million annually. As a result, Lincoln County is hard pressed to provide basic services to our citizens. In fact, Lincoln County is one of the most economically distressed counties in the west. Our economic base is so meager that our youngsters must literally leave home to find work. We are truly saddened by this exodus of our young people. Every community needs young people to build for the future. Our communities are certainly no exception. An inevitable result of the departure of our young people is that our county population is aging and our ability to adequately provide basic services for our senior population is strained. As these pressures continue to increase, our tax base continues to shrink. We need additional tax base.

Our Sheriff informs us that our small and aging county jail is overcrowded and that we are at risk of potential lawsuits because it is inadequate based on current standards. We cannot afford to build a new jail. We need additional tax base.

Our county is served by a small public hospital that is operated and maintained with a part of our ad valorem tax. The hospital board struggles just to maintain the most fundamental hospital services---and is too often unsuccessful. We need additional tax base.

Each of our towns has a dedicated volunteer corps of firefighters and emergency response personnel. These volunteers utilize fire equipment, ambulances and medical equipment that is old and often inadequate for basic emergency response situations. We need additional tax base.

The people of my county are a strong-willed and self-sufficient people. We are family people. We are people of the soil and of the cattle ranges. Many of our families have been in Lincoln County for generations. Our children grow up strong in our pure mountain air and wide open spaces. Unfortunately, as I have described, they have little to grow up to in terms of employment and economic opportunities.

We are proud of our school system. It is strongly supported by our communities. Our kids are often among the best in the State of Nevada when measured by test scores and grade point averages. But our school buildings and facilities are literally crumbling because of lack of funds to repair or replace them. We need additional tax base.

Mr. Chairman, we need H.R. 2752. Passage of the Lincoln Lands Improvement Act will increase our base of privately owned land so we can begin the process of building a viable economic base in Lincoln County.

We are grateful to Congressman Jim Gibbons and Senator Harry Reid for introducing H.R. 2752 and it's Senate companion S.1331. It will allow the Bureau of Land Management to sell certain lands near the rapidly growing City of Mesquite, Nevada by competitive process for residential, commercial and industrial development. It is estimated that by merely placing this land in private hands, without even developing it, will double the current tax base of Lincoln County.

H.R.2752 will be of mutual benefit to Lincoln County and to the City of Mesquite. We have already begun the process of working cooperatively with the City of Mesquite to assure that future development of the land released from BLM is consistent with good municipal planning and zoning concepts such as have already been established by the City of Mesquite.

We express to the Committee our concern that the BLM sell these lands only to entities or individuals that are prepared and willing to develop the lands in a manner consistent with local planning concepts. For our part, we are prepared to continue to work aggressively and cooperatively with BLM and the City of Mesquite to assure that the lands are used only for appropriate development that will become a viable and long-term asset to Lincoln County and the City of Mesquite.

H.R. 2752 stipulates that, of the proceeds derived from the sale of this BLM land, ten percent of the money will be returned to Lincoln County to be used for public purposes with emphasis on support of schools and five percent will go to the State of Nevada to be used for public education. The remainder will go to the federal treasury. What a great benefit this will be to our school kids in Lincoln County and to their teachers.

Again, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee I thank you, on behalf of the people of Lincoln County, for your consideration of H.R. 2752 and I strongly encourage your support and passage of this legislation that is so vital to the future of my county.

Thank you.

###