



Montana & Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council

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RESOLUTION 29Jan2013-04

A RESOLUTION PERTAINING TO BUFFALO/BISON AND THE STATE OF MONTANA

WHEREAS, the Tribal Leaders Council (TLC) has been created for the express purpose of providing the Indian Tribes of Montana and Wyoming with a unified voice and a collective organization to address issues of concern to the Tribes and Indian people; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of the Tribal Leaders Council consists of duly elected Tribal Chairs, Presidents and Council Members who are fully authorized by their respective Tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the Tribal governments in Montana and Wyoming recognize the importance of actively engaging in policy formation on any matters that may affect the Tribes and reservations; and

WHEREAS, the buffalo / bison have enormous cultural and spiritual significance to the Tribes whose traditional and historical homelands and former territories are now largely occupied by states; and

WHEREAS, the Tribes see immeasurable value within the buffalo/bison because of this cultural and spiritual significance which serves as the basis for immensely important relationships between Tribes and the buffalo/bison; and

WHEREAS, the States of Montana and Wyoming and their citizens have benefited from the economic value of buffalo/bison through tourism dollars that are generated by the symbolic stature of buffalo/bison being a major attraction to visitors from throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, for so many centuries, the buffalo/bison were independent and free to roam this continent but they are now confined within a political boundary that is not of their making; and

WHEREAS, what is left of the once huge herds of wild buffalo/bison now find themselves virtually imprisoned and subject to the will of the ruling majority within these political boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the Tribes have repeatedly expressed willingness to taking any buffalo/bison that roam outside their present confining boundaries; and

WHEREAS, all buffalo/ bison should be treated with respect and meaningful regard for their well-being; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 143 would Revise Bison Management laws; establish a year-round hunting season; increase the number of available licenses, prohibit the transfer, relocation, or transplantation of wild buffalo/bison; and grant rulemaking authority and amend the Montana Code Annotated for said purposes; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 256 would hold liable the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks for any bison classified as wildlife that damages private property, a precedent that could financially prohibit restoration efforts; and negatively affect tribal bison under the MOU signed by Fort Belknap Tribes for the transplanted Yellowstone bison; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 305 would prevent bison that have ever been captive and owned by an individual from being classified as "wild," preventing any nonprofit or individual from working with the state on bison conservation where the bison are "owned" for a time by the private entities; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 341 would require Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to navigate through a very extensive list of items and address numerous issues prior to translocation of any wildlife species, a process designed to eliminate any actual possibility of bison transplant; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 396 would give county commissioners the authority the veto bison transplants based on a mere dislike of bison; and could limit the transport of bison from one tribe to another; and

WHEREAS, these Bills are completely contrary to treating the buffalo/bison with the respect that they deserve; and

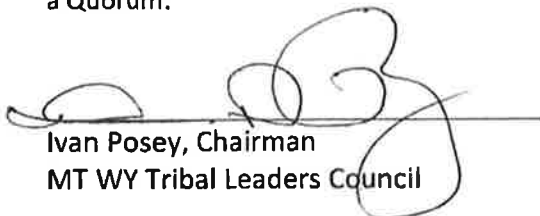
WHEREAS, the long term viability of the wild buffalo/bison, as a life form on this our homeland, should be recognized and enforced with laws that are consistent with Article X of the Constitution of the State of Montana which "recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to their cultural integrity" and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Tribal Leaders Council does hereby state its opposition to the above referenced legislative bills that would threaten the viability of the buffalo/bison and prevent them from being transferred to Tribal lands; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Tribal Leaders Council urges Governor Steve Bullock to veto Senate Bills 143, 256, 305, and 341, and House Bill 396 if they are forwarded to the Office of the Governor by the State Legislature.

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, as the Chair and the Secretary of the Tribal Leaders Council, do hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly presented and approved unanimously at an official Board Meeting which was held on the 29th day of January 2013 in Billings, MT with eight member Tribes present to constitute a Quorum.


Ivan Posey, Chairman
MT WY Tribal Leaders Council


Robert Welch, Secretary
MT WY Tribal Leaders Council