

# ***Bartlett Criticizes Federal Agencies For Large Land Withdrawals***

WASHINGTON—Senator E.L. (Bob) Bartlett criticized federal agencies for large-scale withdrawal of lands from the public domain.

In a statement explaining why he cosponsored a bill to require congressional approval of any withdrawal of public lands in excess of 5,000 acres by the Federal Government, Bartlett noted that federal departments "have a tendency to take far more land from the public domain than they actually require."

"It would be in the public interest to have these departments come to Congress for any large withdrawals. Time after time we have discovered withdrawals have been made far in excess of needs, and once withdrawn, it is difficult to get the land returned to the public domain," Bartlett said.

The proposed legislation would broaden the Defense

Withdrawal Act to include a 5,000-acre limitation on all federal agencies, rather than just on the Department of Defense.

The need for such a bill, Bartlett said, was highlighted by the recent action of the Department of the Interior in issuing its geothermal withdrawing order. This order, since modified, would have withdrawn in one stroke all lands which the department believed to be valuable, either presently or prospectively, for geothermal steam.

Interior Department witnesses admitted that this might amount to more than 80 million acres.

The present bill is similar to one introduced by Senator Bartlett and passed by the Senate in 1960, but not acted upon by the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee in the House.

Previous attempts to get land withdrawal limitation bills passed have encountered opposition from the Interior and Agriculture Departments.