

**STATEMENT OF
JACK CRAVEN, DIRECTOR OF LANDS
FOREST SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
FORESTS AND FOREST HEALTH
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE**

Concerning
H.R. 4656, Conveyance of Certain Forest Service Land
in the Lake Tahoe Basin

July 25, 2000

Madam Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss H.R. 4656, to authorize the Forest Service to convey certain lands in the Lake Tahoe Basin to the Washoe County School District for use as an elementary school site.

The Administration would not object to this bill, as drafted, if it were amended to eliminate use restrictions and future reversions to the United States.

H.R. 4656 would allow the Secretary of Agriculture to convey an 8.7 acre parcel to Washoe County School District for an elementary school site. The bill requires that the conveyance be based on "fair market value." However this fair market value is subject to restrictions that the property could only be used for an elementary school site and would revert back to the United States if used for any other purpose, which reduces the fair market value of the property. These restrictions and reservations are not necessary to protect the interest of the United States or resource values. The effect of these restrictions and reservations is a reduction in the value of the property.

This parcel was originally acquired by the Forest Service under the authority of the "Santini-Burton Act" (94 Stat. 3381; Public Law 96-586) for the purpose of preventing development of environmentally sensitive land. This Act authorizes the

Forest Service to acquire environmentally sensitive lands within the Lake Tahoe Basin. Land acquisition is part of the long-term efforts of the federal agencies, state and county governments and organizations in the Lake Tahoe basin to work together to protect water quality, restore watersheds and wetlands, and thus reduce environmental impacts to Lake Tahoe. While we continue to believe that these lands are environmentally sensitive, it is our understanding the local zoning restrictions would provide adequate protection for this parcel. If this parcel is transferred back into private ownership and developed, there is no benefit to the United States for use restrictions to be placed on the property.

The bill would allow the disposal of this parcel of National Forest System land for an amount less than fair market value of the land without any use restrictions in place. We believe it is sound fiscal management to receive the full value of the property and to use any proceeds from conveyance of this parcel for acquisition of environmentally sensitive land in the Lake Tahoe Basin. However, unless the public receives the full value for this land, the agency will not be able to acquire other lands to replace the environmental protection that was provided by not allowing development on this parcel.

Closing

Madam Chairman, the Administration supports the general objective of making federal lands available for education purposes. However, the Administration objects to this bill as currently drafted and believes very strongly that use restrictions on this parcel should be avoided so that the public will receive full market value for its assets. The Administration remains open to discussions with the Subcommittee regarding an amendment to accomplish this goal.

This concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you and Members of the Subcommittee might have.