

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3—
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Referred to Committee on Natural Resources

SUMMARY—Urges Congress to provide funding to reduce the wild horse and burro populations to appropriate management levels. (BDR R-465)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No.
Effect on the State: No.

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EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION—Urging Congress to provide funding to reduce the wild horse and burro populations to appropriate management levels.

1 WHEREAS, The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of
2 1971, as amended, ensured free-roaming horses and burros existing
3 on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management or U.S.
4 Forest Service in 1971 would be protected and managed as valued
5 components of our public lands; and

6 WHEREAS, Their range was to be sufficient to sustain herds,
7 while ensuring a thriving natural ecological balance with wildlife,
8 livestock and other public lands uses in accordance with the
9 Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960; and

10 WHEREAS, The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of
11 1971 directed the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest
12 Service to determine, in consultation with wildlife agencies, the
13 appropriate management level of free-roaming horses and burros to
14 retain a thriving natural ecological balance of the habitat, forage and
15 water needs of wildlife, livestock and free-roaming horses and
16 burros through the assessment of plant and riparian sustainability;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Once over the appropriate management level,
19 numbers of free-roaming horses and burros were defined as excess
20 to the carrying capacity of the land; and



1 WHEREAS, The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S.
2 Forest Service have used and do use various public processes to set
3 and adjust the appropriate management level on a herd-by-herd
4 basis including, without limitation, resource management plans,
5 land management plans and multiple-use decisions, which are
6 typically analyzed in accordance with the requirements of the
7 National Environmental Policy Act; and

8 WHEREAS, In Nevada, water comprises a mere 2 percent of our
9 public lands in the form of scattered springs, small streams and
10 ephemeral playas, and is essential for the survival of wildlife,
11 livestock and free-roaming horses and burros alike; and

12 WHEREAS, An appropriate management level determination
13 must include the level of functionality of those small riparian areas
14 and water sources on which all living things on public lands depend;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, In order to assist in achieving the thriving natural
17 ecological balance mandate, the Bureau of Land Management and
18 the U.S. Forest Service should remove excess free-roaming horses
19 and burros by making them available for adoption or placing them
20 in short-term or long-term holdings, such as lifetime pastures, or
21 treating them with fertility inhibitors and returning them to public
22 lands; and

23 WHEREAS, Nevada hosts over 50 percent of all free-roaming
24 horses and burros on our semi-arid and arid Great Basin and Mojave
25 Desert lands; and

26 WHEREAS, In Nevada, the appropriate management level
27 necessary to ensure a thriving natural ecological balance was
28 determined to be a total of 12,800 horses and burros in the state's 83
29 Herd Management Areas; and

30 WHEREAS, Today in Nevada, the Herd Management Areas are
31 on average 300 percent over the appropriate management level, with
32 50,000 free-roaming horses and burros on Bureau of Land
33 Management lands and 2,500 on U.S. Forest Service lands; and

34 WHEREAS, Some Herd Management Areas have populations at
35 thousands of percent above the appropriate management level; and

36 WHEREAS, In addition, there are approximately 5,500 other feral
37 or stray horses and burros in areas outside of the jurisdiction of the
38 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, including on
39 state, tribal and military lands; and

40 WHEREAS, Free-roaming horse and burro populations double
41 every 3 to 5 years; and

42 WHEREAS, The populations of free-roaming horses and burros
43 that are above the appropriate management level of the last 4
44 decades have, in many areas, impacted ecosystem health as well as
45 habitat, forage and water resources, which imperils the health and



1 well-being of wildlife, livestock, vegetation, and free-roaming
2 horses and burros themselves; and

3 WHEREAS, Inadequate, short-term congressional Bureau of Land
4 Management budget allocations have prevented the effective
5 removal of excess free-roaming horses and burros required for
6 healthy ecosystems and resulted in additional problems including
7 insufficient pasture and holding facilities, an absence of logistically
8 effective long-term fertility inhibitors, and populations above the
9 appropriate management level that are growing exponentially; and

10 WHEREAS, In 2019, wildlife and livestock welfare organizations
11 including the Humane Society of the United States and the
12 American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
13 collaboratively crafted a plan, "The Path Forward for Management
14 of BLM's Wild Horses & Burros," proposing a pathway to reduce
15 free-roaming horse and burro populations to the appropriate
16 management level using non-lethal methods; and

17 WHEREAS, The underpinnings of this plan became part of the
18 Bureau of Land Management's 2020 "Report to Congress: An
19 Analysis of Achieving a Sustainable Wild Horse & Burro Program,"
20 which hinged on requiring sufficient short and longer-term funding
21 for success; and

22 WHEREAS, The work of "Wild Horse Annie" (Velma Johnston),
23 which assisted in the passage of the Wild and Free-Roaming Wild
24 Horse and Burro Act of 1971, is failing to achieve the goals which
25 were made in good faith of ensuring a place for free-roaming horses
26 and burros on public lands, while retaining a thriving natural
27 ecological balance; and

28 WHEREAS, This thriving natural ecological balance needs to be
29 restored as quickly as possible; now, therefore, be it

30 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF
31 NEVADA, JOINTLY, That the members of the 81st Session of the
32 Nevada Legislature support the Bureau of Land Management's 2020
33 Report to Congress urging sufficient short-term funding for
34 immediate effectiveness and longer-term funding for sustained
35 efficacy and overall success, apportioned according to free-roaming
36 horses and burros numbers in each state; and be it further

37 RESOLVED, That given the impacts of excess free-roaming
38 horses and burros on our fragile Great Basin and Mojave
39 ecosystems, the members of the 81st Session of the Nevada
40 Legislature support reducing excess free-roaming horses and burros
41 to achieve the appropriate management level, using non-lethal
42 means, within 6 years to protect and restore the health and viability
43 of our public lands and habitats for wildlife, free-roaming horses
44 and burros and other uses into the future; and be it further



1 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and
2 transmit a copy of this resolution to the Vice President of the United
3 States as the presiding officer of the Senate, the Speaker of the
4 House of Representatives and each member of the Nevada
5 Congressional Delegation; and be it further
6 RESOLVED, That this resolution becomes effective upon
7 passage.

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