

1 **JOINT RESOLUTION ON WILD HORSES AND BURROS**

2 2015 GENERAL SESSION

3 STATE OF UTAH

4 **Chief Sponsor: Evan J. Vickers**

5 House Sponsor: Mike K. McKell

7 **LONG TITLE**

8 **General Description:**

9 This joint resolution of the Legislature urges the United States Congress to create a
10 process for transferring to the state of Utah authority to protect and manage feral horses
11 and burros within its borders.

12 **Highlighted Provisions:**

13 This resolution:

14 ▶ urges Congress to create a process for transferring to the state of Utah authority to
15 protect and manage feral horses and burros within its borders; and

16 ▶ urges the Governor to draft a feral horse and burro management plan that:
17 • reflects the general objectives and purposes of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses
18 and Burros Act of 1971;

19 • protects and manages feral horses and burros within the state;
20 • recognizes the sovereign interests of resident Indian tribes;
21 • protects and balances livestock forage allocations with feral horse and burro

22 requirements;

23 • maintains healthy range and water resources;
24 • protects and balances the habitat needs of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife; and
25 • maintains an ecological balance on the land.

26 **Special Clauses:**

27 None

28
29 *Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

30 WHEREAS, feral horses and burros are well established and abundant in Utah and
31 across the West;

32 WHEREAS, feral horse and burro numbers in Utah significantly exceed, in many
33 management areas, the population objectives established by the United States Forest Service
34 and Bureau of Land Management pursuant to the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act
35 of 1971 (16 U.S.C. Sec. 1331, et seq.);

36 WHEREAS, excessive feral horse and burro populations in Utah are damaging range
37 and water resources, consuming forage allocated to livestock and wildlife, abridging
38 multiple-use principles applicable to public lands, and otherwise impairing the natural
39 ecological balance on impacted lands;

40 WHEREAS, 16 U.S.C. Sec. 1333(b)(2)(iv) of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and
41 Burros Act requires the United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to
42 "immediately remove excess animals from the range so as to achieve appropriate management
43 levels" when populations exceed established objectives;

44 WHEREAS, the United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have
45 failed to adequately act to remove excess feral horses and burros damaging Utah's public and
46 private lands, which is reducing available forage allocated to livestock and negatively
47 impacting wildlife and its habitat;

48 WHEREAS, feral horse and burro numbers are expected to rise 20% or more each year
49 -- significantly adding to the number of animals over established population objectives and
50 their commensurate impact to state sovereign interests in healthy ecosystems, range health,
51 agriculture, and wildlife;

52 WHEREAS, feral horse and burro populations are growing faster than adoption and
53 holding facilities have capacity to accommodate, and the United States Forest Service and
54 Bureau of Land Management refuse to utilize lethal removal as a management tool to remove
55 excess feral horses and burros, as required by 16 U.S.C. Sec. 1333(b)(2)(iv)(C);

56 WHEREAS, feral horse and burro populations are expected to grow unchecked by the
57 federal government, to the detriment of the state of Utah and the health, safety, and welfare of

58 its citizens; and

59 WHEREAS, healthy ecosystems, hunting, wildlife viewing, ranching, and livestock
60 production contribute significantly to the economy, heritage, and quality of life in Utah:

61 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah
62 urges the United States Congress to create a process for transferring to the state of Utah
63 authority to protect and responsibly manage the feral horses and burros on public and private
64 lands within its borders.

65 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature strongly urges the Governor to
66 bring interested stakeholders and governmental interests together to prepare a state feral horse
67 and burro management plan.

68 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature urges that the objectives and
69 strategies of the plan reflect the general objectives and purposes of the Wild Free-Roaming
70 Horses and Burros Act, protect and responsibly manage feral horses and burros within the state,
71 recognize the sovereign interests of resident Indian tribes, protect and balance livestock forage
72 allocations with feral horse and burro requirements, maintain healthy range and water
73 resources, protect and balance the habitat requirements of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife,
74 complement existing wildlife species management plans, and maintain an ecological balance
75 on the land.

76 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Speaker of
77 the House of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States
78 Senate, the United States Secretary of the Interior, the United States Secretary of Agriculture,
79 the Governor of the state of Utah, and the members of Utah's congressional delegation.