

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN UTAHRESOLUTION FOR DIOCESAN CONVENTION 2022

In order that debate may be directed toward the resolution and not toward its justification, only the "RESOLVED..." will be moved. The explanation of the resolution will, however, be distributed to delegates. Resolutions may be submitted to the Convention by the Bishop, Standing Committee, Diocesan Council, a member of the Clergy canonically resident in the Diocese, a Warden, a delegate to the Convention, a Diocesan Council representative of any Region of the Diocese, a Vestry, A Bishop's Committee, a Congregation, a Diocesan Commission or a Diocesan Committee.

TOPIC: Resolution in Support of America's Red Rock Wilderness Act and for the Perpetual Protection and management of Grand Staircase-Escalante & Bears Ears National Monuments

1 RESOLVED:

2 WHEREAS Episcopalians respect the interdependent web of all existence – of which this fragile
3 earth, our island home, is a part; and

4

5 WHEREAS our Baptismal Covenant calls us to strive for justice and peace among all people;
6 and

7

8 WHEREAS in 2018, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirmed the President of
9 the House of Deputies' and the Presiding Bishop's call to the Church to recognize Care of
10 Creation as an integral part of The Jesus Movement; and

11 WHEREAS we, as Christians, recognize through the Gospel lessons of Jesus' journey into the
12 wilderness the vital role that an appreciation of God's magnificent creation can play in our own
13 spiritual formation; and

14 WHEREAS America's Red Rock Wilderness Act – legislation that was first introduced in
15 Congress by Utah Rep Wayne Owens in 1989 and has been continuously documented and
16 updated during the past 33 years by the Department of Interior, and an active and engaged
17 citizenry – would designate as Wilderness roughly 9 million acres of outstanding natural public
18 landscapes, much of which is within Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national
19 monuments, and bordering Utah's national parks; and

20 WHEREAS these wild lands contain some of the world's richest concentrations of sacred sites
21 important to the spiritual well-being of Native American cultures – Ute Indian Tribe, Ute
22 Mountain Ute, Pueblo of Zuni, Hopi Tribe, and Navajo Nation – that endure, despite challenges,
23 today; and

24

25 WHEREAS these lands are deeply valued by people from many different spiritual traditions as
26 places of inspiration, connection, renewal and solace; and

27

28 WHEREAS the urgent, existential threat posed by our warming planet disproportionately and
29 negatively impacts the underserved, underprivileged, indigenous, and people of color across the

30 world; and

31

32 WHEREAS the publicly owned wild lands of Utah, managed by the Bureau of Land
33 Management, belong to everyone and the protection of our public lands works to the benefit of
34 current and future generations; and

35

36 WHEREAS fossil fuels derived from public lands account for 25% of all greenhouse gas
37 emissions in the U.S. according to a 2018 U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) study commissioned
38 by the Secretary of Interior; and

39

40 WHEREAS protecting these lands and keeping that carbon in the ground significantly helps
41 mitigate carbon emissions and maintains the ability of naturally functioning systems to
42 sequester carbon from the atmosphere; and

43

44 WHEREAS the best defense against the effects of global warming (drier conditions, wildfires,
45 diminished water resources, spread of non-native invasive plants, and dust storms) on Utah's
46 public lands is to minimize ground disturbance and minimize degradation of the natural
47 environment; and

48

49 WHEREAS these wild lands provide home to endangered or sensitive wildlife, including desert
50 bighorn sheep, cougar, endangered desert tortoise, and habitat for elk, deer, mountain lion, bear,
51 coyote and many other animals; and

52

53 WHEREAS these wild lands, if protected, would account for 1.5% of the remaining land that
54 needs to be conserved to reach the goal of protecting 30% of the land in the United States by
55 2030; and it would preserve large unspoiled wild areas in their natural state throughout Utah as
56 well as five regional wildlife corridors that are critical to three wildlife megalinkages within the
57 continental-scale Western Wildway enhancing the Alaskan-Canadian Arctic with the Isthmus of
58 Panama: Grand Canyon to Yellowstone, Grand Canyon to the Bitterroot Wilderness of Central
59 Idaho, and the Green River (Canyonlands to Grand Teton); and

60

61 WHEREAS the Commission on Peace & Justice of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah (the
62 "Commission"), which is charged by canon with the task of developing and implementing
63 recommendations and strategies on issues of peace and justice, has examined the merits of
64 America's Red Rock Wilderness Act as they relate to the mission and the environmental justice
65 concerns of the Diocese; and

66

67 WHEREAS, based on such examination, the Commission has determined that America's Red
68 Rock Wilderness Act closely aligns with the Diocese's interests in preserving and protecting
69 God's creation and has therefore recommended that the Diocese and its parish congregations
70 call for its passage; and

71

72 WHEREAS America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, soon to be re-introduced into the 117th
73 Congress, is supported by the Utah Wilderness Coalition's more than 130 national and regional
74 conservation groups, and is fully field-checked and documented,

75

76 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 2022 Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Utah
77 urges its congregations and their members to:

78

- 79 • call for passage of America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act to protect Utah’s spectacular
80 and irreplaceable wild lands by writing or visiting their senators and representatives
81 seeking their support to protect their outstanding natural resources from exploitation
82 from off-road vehicle abuse, vegetation removal and fossil fuel development;

- 83 • call for the passage of America’s Red Rock Wilderness Act to help mitigate the climate
84 crisis, protect habitat, animals, birds and all creatures, and to help mitigate racial and
85 environmental injustices; and

- 86 • call for the permanent protection by Congress of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-
87 Escalante national monuments as requested by Native American Tribes, First Nations
88 and an overwhelming majority of Americans; and use the resources of the Utah
89 Wilderness Coalition (www.protectwildutah.org) and Southern Utah Wilderness
90 Alliance (www.suwa.org) to educate themselves and others about the environmental and
91 spiritual importance of protecting Utah’s wild lands.

Date: February 8, 2022

Moved by Peace and Justice Commission

Congregation/Organization: Peace and Justice Commission

+ + +

EXPLANATION: This resolution is consistent with the Diocese of Utah’s history and practice of taking positions on and advocating for public policy changes and legislation consistent with our call to be stewards of Creation. Advocacy and education on this legislation do not endanger the Diocese’s tax-exempt status.

Fiscal Note: None