

Policy Resolutions

AGRICULTURE

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-05, Western Agriculture](#)

Western Governors support an array of funding, trade, education, research, and workforce development programs that promote agricultural contributions to the economies and quality of life in western states. Extended drought, changes in climate, and other factors have had significant effects on agricultural practices throughout the West. The Governors, in this resolution, provide policy recommendations to support and strengthen the health and prosperity of western agricultural communities and their economies.

CYBERSECURITY

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-05, Cybersecurity](#)

The cybersecurity of their states and the nation is a high priority for Western Governors. In this resolution, Western Governors encourage Congress and the Administration to fully fund state election security measures and to work cooperatively with states in implementing the newly created state and local cybersecurity grant program. It also provides recommendations for: increasing the cybersecurity workforce; addressing threats to critical infrastructure and supply chains; improving cyber literacy; enhancing cross-agency and cross-sector coordination; mitigating and discouraging cybercrime; and incentivizing information sharing and innovation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-03, Workforce Development in the Western United States](#)

Western Governors support work-based learning, high-quality career and technical education, and lifelong learning through workforce development policies. Governors also emphasize the need for flexibility in workforce system funding to help states anticipate and respond to changing economic conditions with creative solutions. In addition to increased investment in state data infrastructure, the resolution also encourages better alignment across federal workforce, housing, human services, and education programs to improve the delivery of services.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-04, Foreign Visitor Preclearance](#)

Governors support the expanded use of air preclearance operations at foreign airports to: streamline international travel; protect the safety and security of American citizens and international travelers; and ease burdens placed on small or rural airports that serve a significant number of international travelers. The resolution describes the need

to expand safety protocols for travel during the COVID-19 pandemic and urges Customs and Border Protection to comply with federal and state health guidance.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-12, Recreation and Tourism on Public Lands](#)

This resolution articulates Western Governors' policy on the management of recreation and tourism on public lands. Governors support public access and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities while protecting ecological, economic and cultural resources. The resolution recommends actions the federal government should take to ensure that federal land management agencies have the resources needed to accommodate increased visitation, improve visitor experience, support local economies, and maintain public lands for multiple uses.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-04, Housing is Foundational to the Success of the West](#)

Due to rapid population growth and housing shortages, housing is a significant challenge in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the West. This resolution highlights Western Governors' policy related to the availability and affordability of housing in western states and territories. While many of the policies and programs affecting housing are within the jurisdiction of local governments, a variety of federal programs influence housing markets and housing development. In the resolution, the Governors recommend actions to improve federal housing programs and resources so that they function more effectively for western states and territories.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-06, Rural Development](#)

Healthy, vibrant, and prosperous rural communities are critical to western states. Rural communities, however, face a variety of challenges with respect to economic development, infrastructure, and quality of life. This resolution details policies and recommendations to strengthen rural communities and businesses and ensure that programs delivering state and federal resources are efficient and accessible.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-07, Broadband Connectivity](#)

In this resolution, Western Governors highlight the importance of high-speed internet (broadband) for communities across the West. The Governors discuss common infrastructure challenges – vast distances, unforgiving terrain, and multi-jurisdictional permitting – that complicate broadband deployment projects in western states and territories. Their recommendations address new federal broadband investments and programs, data and mapping, digital equity, and strategies to help connect rural and tribal communities.

ENERGY & MINING

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-01, Energy in the West](#)

In this resolution, Western Governors communicate their collective energy policy priorities for the West and offer policy recommendations on grid modernization and resilience, energy innovation and technology, and economic and workforce development. The resolution recognizes the significant energy resources of the West and discusses the importance of creating an effective state-federal relationship to support energy development, land management and environmental protection in the region.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-08, National Minerals Policy](#)

Western Governors support building on the 1970 Mining and Minerals Policy Act with legislation and policies to unlock our domestic mineral potential and ensure access to metals critical to U.S. economic and national security. The Governors call attention to the critical issue of permitting delays and support the timely processing of mining permit applications. The resolution recognizes that an increased supply of domestically produced minerals is essential to the increased deployment of alternative energy technologies.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-02, Air Quality Protection and Management](#)

In this resolution, Western Governors communicate the importance of cooperative federalism in air quality management. The resolution provides recommendations to improve the state-federal relationship in the regulation of air quality, ozone and particulate matter, exceptional events, regional haze, wildfire and prescribed fire, and methane and hydrofluorocarbon emissions. The Governors, for example, advocate for improved tools that encourage the use of prescribed fire, which is managed as part of state air quality programs, to reduce the air quality effects of uncharacteristic wildfire in the West.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-09, Radioactive Materials](#)

Management The resolution establishes Western Governors' policy on radioactive materials management. Specifically, the resolution supports the U.S. Department of Energy's safe and uneventful transportation of transuranic waste through western states to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant disposal site in New Mexico. It notes the need for ongoing compliance with federal radioactive waste transport safety requirements and early coordination and effective communication with state, tribal and local governments. The resolution also affirms that no radioactive waste storage or disposal facility should be located within the geographic boundaries of a western state or U.S. territory without the written consent of the current Governor.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-10, Infrastructure Permitting](#)

A clear, consistent, focused, and effective environmental review process is essential to protect environmental resources, ensure public participation, and facilitate timely decision making in the design, financing, and execution of critical infrastructure and land management projects. These review processes can be improved and streamlined while still providing meaningful opportunities for public input and promoting a safe and healthy environment for our citizens. This resolution makes several recommendations for Congress and the Administration to consider as they continue evaluating permitting processes. These include prioritizing the hiring of qualified permitting staff in agency field offices, streamlining review processes for similar projects delivering an environmental or conservation outcome, and making processes more accessible to underserved or historically disadvantaged communities, including small and rural communities. The resolution also emphasizes that federal permitting policies and efforts to streamline permitting processes should be flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of local communities and that federal efforts should increase transparency, accessibility, and agency accountability for all projects.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-08, Cleaning Up](#)

Abandoned Hardrock Mines in the West "Good Samaritans" are entities that voluntarily clean up abandoned mine sites. These Good Samaritans face potential liability under the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), despite not having owned or operated the mine. In the resolution, Western Governors call on Congress to enact legislation to protect Good Samaritans from potential liabilities under CWA, CERCLA, and RCRA. Western Governors support pilot projects, including projects under state-led programs, to address site-specific liabilities if comprehensive legislation addressing these issues is not possible in the short term. The resolution also emphasizes that states are best suited to determine Good Samaritan eligibility and manage reclamation plans and calls for full appropriations for the Abandoned Hardrock Mine Reclamation Program to address the backlog of abandoned hardrock mine inventory.

HEALTH CARE

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-07, Physical and Behavioral Health Care in Western States](#)

Access to quality physical and behavioral health care services is an important factor in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in western states. This resolution identifies health care challenges affecting the West, including those that have grown increasingly pronounced due to COVID-19, such as personnel shortages in the health care industry and limited access to behavioral health and substance use disorder services. It also outlines the Governors' policies to address these challenges, including federal regulatory changes to create an environment that is conducive to the use of telehealth, investment in public health infrastructure, and the importance of strong state-federal collaboration to ensure that all levels of government are working together to promote the best interests of western citizens.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-04, Combating the Opioid Crisis](#)

The opioid epidemic has become one of the nation's most devastating and lethal public health and safety crises. This new resolution highlights the challenges posed by the potency and availability of these drugs and the social and economic damage they inflict on communities and contains Western Governors' policy related to combating rising rates of opioid use disorders, overdoses, and deaths. The Governors support efforts to identify and mitigate emerging threats, curb the supply and distribution of illicit opioids and the inappropriate use of prescriptions, and provide access to a full range of effective prevention, treatment, and recovery approaches.

PUBLIC LANDS

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-10, Federal-State Land Exchanges and Purchases](#)

Most federally owned lands are located in western states, and they are often interspersed with state, tribal, county, municipal, and private lands. This ownership pattern complicates various land management activities, including wildfire mitigation, habitat conservation, and watershed protection. In this resolution, Western Governors call on Congress to simplify and expedite federal-state land exchange, sale and conveyance processes to help address checkerboard land ownership challenges in the West. The resolution also encourages the Bureau of Land Management to fully leverage its authority to dispose of public land parcels for other public purposes.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-01, Working Lands, Working Communities](#)

The resolution recognizes the complex relationship between western communities and the landscapes that sustain them. Our lands offer economic opportunity, ecological benefits, and contribute to a high quality of life in western states and territories. The resolution notes the importance of collaboration between western communities and state, territorial, local, tribal, and federal land and resource management entities, as well as the role that communities play in successful land planning and management processes. It makes several recommendations to improve collaborative endeavors, promote cross-boundary management, and enhance community capacity to address the many challenges facing our working lands.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-02, States' Share of Royalties and Leasing Revenues from Federal Lands and Minerals](#)

The federal government has codified several historic agreements and programs to compensate western states for costs associated with the presence of tax-exempt federal lands within their borders. The federal government must honor its obligations to share royalty and lease payments with states and counties. States, as recipients of revenues from these programs and agreements, should be provided meaningful and substantial opportunities for consultation in the development of federal policy affecting those revenues.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-02, National Forest and Rangeland Management](#)

Western states contain over 75 percent of the national forest and grassland system, and communities in the West depend upon forests and rangelands for jobs, recreation, and quality of life. This resolution addresses a variety of national forest and rangeland challenges, emphasizing that effective management is only possible through coordination between federal, state, local, and tribal land management agencies, including collaborative, cross-boundary management strategies. The resolution articulates Western Governors' policy recommendations relating to wildfire mitigation, suppression, and recovery. It also addresses major land management topics such as workforce development, infrastructure for active forest management, grazing administration, and forest products.

SPECIES MANAGEMENT

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-06, Compensatory Mitigation](#)

Mitigation plays an important role in wildlife management and conservation, and Western Governors use mitigation programs and policies in developing and executing species conservation strategies. In this resolution, Western Governors call on federal agencies to adopt and implement state-supported compensatory mitigation programs and policies that highlight the states' various compensatory mitigation guidelines. It also notes that mitigation of development impacts to habitat or natural resources must account for a level of risk and that the most beneficial mitigation projects may not be located directly on or adjacent to affected areas. The resolution proposes several objectives to guide development of federal mitigation policy.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2022-11, Biosecurity and Invasive Species Management](#)

Focusing on invasive species management, the resolution addresses the destructive relationship between invasive grasses and wildfires as well as mechanisms to enhance regional invasive species research, planning and coordination. It also includes recommendations to Congress and federal agencies on improving invasive species management on federal lands and supporting state-led management efforts.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-03, Species Conservation and the Endangered Species Act](#)

This resolution updates Western Governors' policy positions on species management and conservation issues. The resolution expresses the Governors' support for increased voluntary and proactive management efforts and use of best available science, while acknowledging the variability in state approaches to wildlife and habitat conservation. The resolution also contains Western Governors' policy on wildlife migration corridors and habitat.

STATE-FEDERAL RELATIONSHIP

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-03, Tax-Exempt Federal Lands and Secure Rural Schools](#) The federal government must honor its historic Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) agreement with states and counties in the West to compensate them for the presence of tax-exempt federal lands within their borders. Full and predictable payments under the PILT and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) programs are vital to the provision of state and county public goods and services, such as roads, emergency response, and wildlife and natural resources protection. Western Governors support legislative efforts to improve the predictability and reliability of PILT payments and ensure forest counties receive stable SRS payments.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-08, Veterans](#) The Department of Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies offer many programs and services for veterans who struggle with complex challenges after their service, including higher unemployment rates, homelessness, food insecurity, physical and psychological wounds, and bureaucratic barriers. This resolution highlights Western Governors' policy related to veterans' issues and strategies for improving federal programs. Their recommendations address collaboration between federal and state governments, capacity and staffing needs, claims processes, and access to and awareness of critical services.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2023-09, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons](#) American Indian and Alaska Native people, particularly women, are disproportionately likely to experience violence, be murdered, or go missing. This resolution highlights Western Governors' policy to address this crisis. While many of these policies and programs are primarily within the jurisdiction of state and tribal governments, a variety of federal policies influence the resources available to tribes and states. In the resolution, Western Governors recommend actions to expand law enforcement capacity, shore up survivor support systems, and improve collaboration and coordination at all levels of government.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-01, Strengthening the State-Federal Relationship](#) Improving state-federal communication and coordination is among the Western Governors' highest priorities. In the absence of a Constitutional delegation of authority to the federal government, state authority should be presumed sovereign. Each executive department and agency should have a clear and accountable process to provide states with early, meaningful, and substantive input in the development of federal regulatory policies. Where authority has been delegated by the federal government to the states, states should be granted the maximum administrative discretion possible and should be treated as partners and co-regulators.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-05, Disaster Preparedness and Response](#) The resolution recognizes the role Governors have in coordinating the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It also highlights federal agencies' roles and emphasizes the need for cooperation and clear communication between all levels of government and members of the public. In any disaster or emergency situation, good communication is key to developing and executing an effective response, promoting public confidence in that response, and empowering citizens to make informed decisions about their safety and welfare.

TRANSPORTATION

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-06, Transportation Infrastructure in the Western United States](#) The resolution addresses surface transportation needs in the West. Western Governors emphasize their support for a long-term federal funding mechanism for the maintenance and expansion of both surface transportation networks and ports. The resolution highlights the need for flexible and accessible funding that allows states to optimize infrastructure investment alongside efficient processes and waivers to ensure timely deployment of funding. It also outlines the unique air service needs of rural communities, and the need for state-federal collaboration when planning and siting electric vehicle infrastructure.

WATER

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-07, Water Resource Management in the West](#) The resolution addresses the management of water resources in the West, highlighting states' sovereign authority over the allocation of water within their boundaries. The resolution also emphasizes the importance of federal infrastructure investment in delivering clean and reliable water to communities throughout the West. Governors support federal programs and the role they play in managing water resources including programs under the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Geological Survey, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The resolution also addresses emerging cybersecurity threats.

[WGA Policy Resolution 2024-09, Water Quality in the West](#) Clean water is essential to strong economies, healthy ecosystems, and quality of life in the West. In this resolution, Governors emphasize states' role as co-regulators in the implementation of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. It also conveys Western Governors' shared perspective on the role of federal assistance in meeting federal water quality standards, including technical assistance and funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds.

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