

# OPINION

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## OUR VIEW

# BLM bigwigs should move west

A bipartisan group of senators and congressmen says the headquarters for the Bureau of Land Management should move out of Washington, D.C., and relocate in the West, where the agency manages 385,000 square miles of public lands.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who oversees the BLM, agrees. So do we.

Colorado Republican Sen. Cory Gardner introduced a bill to move the BLM to one of a dozen states in the West — Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington or Wyoming.

“You’re dealing with an agency that basically has no business in Washington, D.C.,” Gardner told The Associated Press.

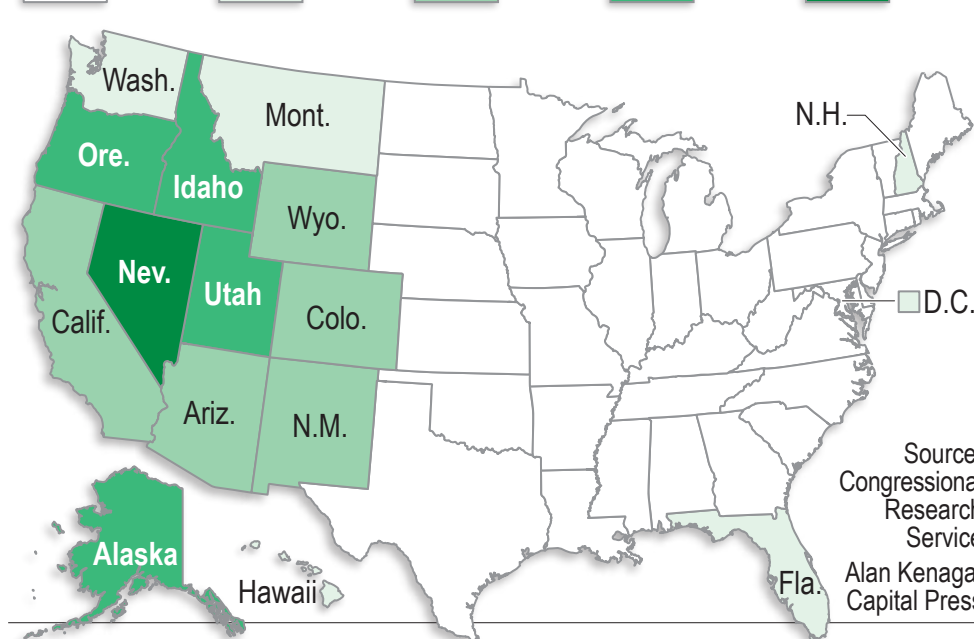
Colorado Republican Rep. Scott Tipton introduced a similar measure in the House, and three Democrats signed up as co-sponsors: Reps. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, Jared Polis of Colorado and Ed Perlmutter of Colorado.

The logic of this idea isn’t hard for people in the West to understand. BLM manages huge swaths of Western states. (The BLM owns

## Federal land by state

Land area by percent of state

0-10% 11-30% 31-50% 51-80% > 80%



only one small parcel in Clatsop County, but much more in Tillamook County and many thousands of acres elsewhere in Oregon.) Its decisions impact the livelihoods of people who populate rural communities, but those decisions are made far from

the forests, grasslands and high deserts they call home.

Not everyone is in love with the idea, particularly the special interests who court influence inside the Washington beltway.

Athan Manuel, director of the

Sierra Club’s public lands program, said the Bureau of Land Management is already decentralized, and moving the headquarters would waste money.

“It’s a solution in search of a problem,” he told AP.

Critics say the BLM and other agencies need to be headquartered in the capital to be included in budget and policy discussions. But having all those discussions in Washington is part of the problem. That’s better for K Street lobbyists and the environmental special interests, but not so good for the people those policies impact.

While it’s true that less than 5 percent of the bureau’s 9,000 employees are stationed in D.C., they have more say and less access to the national treasures they administer than their colleagues in the field.

Putting BLM headquarters in Denver, Boise or Seattle wouldn’t change its statutory mission. But it would give the agency bigwigs a different perspective and a better-than-nodding acquaintance with the territory they manage and the people who live there.

## GUEST COLUMN

# A love of re-enacting history

As a longtime member of the Northwest Civil War Council and co-event coordinator for the Fort Stevens Civil War Re-enactment, I would like to clarify a few things regarding this annual event.

First, I would like to thank the local Fort Stevens park rangers and the Friends of Old Fort Stevens for your cooperation and partnership over all these years. You guys have been great to work with and I appreciate all you have done. It was the Fort Stevens park rangers who went to bat for us when the state threatened to shut down the event the last several years due to extreme fire danger from the exceptionally warm, dry Augusts we’ve had here on the coast. You have gone above and beyond the call of duty many times over the last 27 years. I do not blame you for the decision that was handed down. I know that it came from Salem and was out of your control.

The additional fees proposed by the state were simply more than the council’s board of directors felt we could absorb. We are a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, with limited funds, and the majority of the board felt it was too risky to continue without the support of Friends of Old Fort Stevens and the park.

As it was, the club spent just under \$10,000 last year to stage the event, between port-a-potties, firewood, advertising, permits and other costs. Much of this was spent locally. This doesn’t include what the individual re-enactors spent in the area for food, gas and meals.

Besides the hundreds of re-enactors who were drawn to this event, we attracted thousands of spectators. Many of these were from outside the area. These spectators brought in additional revenue for local businesses. An economic study done by Lebanon, Oregon, showed that more than \$40,000 was spent there during one of our smaller two-day events. As a lifelong Astorian, I know this will have a financial impact on our small coastal community.

Contrary to the editorial in The Daily Astorian (“Civil War re-enactment fulfilled valuable mission”), we have never tied up camping areas that could otherwise be booked. Our members have always camped in period-correct canvas tents in the historical area of the park, far removed from the Fort Stevens campground. Another misconception in the editorial is that the state park subsidizes the re-enactments. This is simply not true. The council pays for all the costs of putting on these events. The park and the Friends of Old Fort Stevens did take care of things like collecting admission, parking event attendees and garbage collection.

The park still received all of the state park day use fees during the event, which is a substantial sum. In addition, we have contributed financially to the Friends of Old Fort Stevens over the years. The next time you visit the



Danielle Fisher, left, and Sharon Stanovich in period costume.



Confederate re-enactors cook up a mess of beans.

Fort Stevens historical area, take a look around. The Civil War earthworks, the massive new flagpole inside, the Civil War-era cannons, we have helped to make all of these possible with our financial contributions. One of our founding members, the late Lou Scott, was instrumental in bringing back the can-

nons to the fort. The fully functioning Civil War-era cannon there still bears his name.

The other item that has been brought up is the controversy over the Confederate flag. We do fly Confederate flags at our re-enactments, but only in the proper historical context. The first and second national flags



Dorian Mason plays the drum.

of the Confederate States of America are flown over the Confederate headquarters and parade grounds. During battles, the Army of Northern Virginia battle flag is carried. The company streets fly their state flags and a carefully researched replica of the battle flag they would have carried during the war. There is no racism involved and no modern politics discussed during the events. If we want to argue politics while at an event, there are plenty of 1860s issues to discuss!

As a club we have shared weddings, funerals, good times and sad times at this event. Our kids and grandchildren have grown up at these re-enactments. I joined here at Fort Stevens back in 1992 and married my wife, Sharon, here in 2012. All of us have always enjoyed sharing our knowledge of this part of history with all of you, and I’d like to thank all those who have attended this re-enactment.

Our members come from all walks of life. Men, women and children from all over the Pacific Northwest. We all share one thing — a deep appreciation and love for history. As the editorial states, re-enactors can be eccentric. Yes, I suppose this is very true. For most of us it is far more than just a hobby, it is a way of life. We love history. We love re-enacting history. Besides the Civil War, many of us belong to other living history groups. My wife and I also belong to the Edwardian Society of Oregon, the Oregon Regency Society and the group I founded, the Columbia River Association of Pirates. Does this make us eccentric? Oh, I guess you could say that!

As for the Northwest Civil War Council, we have always demonstrated both military and Victorian-era civilian life at this event and will continue to do so — unfortunately, it must be at a new location.

We will all miss Fort Stevens immensely, but we will continue. This is but one of four public events we do during the year. We still have our Camp Sherman re-enactment near Sisters, Antique Powerland Civil War re-enactment near Salem and another near Colton. In addition, we do parades and many, many school presentations. It will be hard to replace Fort Stevens, but replace it we must. This may be a “retreat,” but we shall fight on!

Goodbye Fort Stevens, and thank you for all the great memories.

James Stanovich is colonel of the Confederate Battalion of the Northwest Civil War Council and the press foreman at The Daily Astorian.