

# Citing Additional Evidence, Watchdog Renews Call for IRS to Investigate Lobbying by American Stewards of Liberty

## *Anti-Land Conservation Group Apparently Devoting Substantial Portion of its Activities to Influence Legislation, in Violation of its Tax-Exempt Status*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Citing new evidence, government watchdog Accountable.US today [renewed its request](#) that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) investigate anti-land conservation group American Stewards of Liberty (ASL) for devoting a substantial part of its activities to attempts to influence legislation, in violation of its tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

“By its own admission, a significant portion of American Stewards’ activities involve attempts to influence legislation, and its primary objective can only be achieved through advocating for or against legislation. Such an approach violates their nonprofit tax status,” **said Jordan Schreiber, energy and environment director at Accountable.US.** “American Stewards won’t tell the truth about the America The Beautiful (30x30) land conservation initiative because they know preserving our land and water for future generations is broadly popular with the American people. They would rather spend their time lobbying in violation of their tax status, making demonstrably false claims, and spreading bizarre conspiracy theories.”

In addition to lobbying, ASL has made the bizarre claim that land conservation efforts have their roots in [Hitler’s Germany](#). The group’s leaders have also [claimed](#) such efforts are akin to the Stalin-engineered Ukrainian genocide of the 1930s and promoted a wild conspiracy theory that land conservation is a United Nations ploy to subvert property rights.

### **ABOUT THE REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION:**

In [renewing its request](#), Accountable.US noted that “ASL has greatly expanded its lobbying efforts, getting over 100 counties to sign on in support of its anti-30x30 legislation.” Also, “the group is now supporting two bills in Congress and had the sponsor of one of the bills and a co-sponsor of the other at its Stop 30x30 Summit in Lincoln, NW on April 22, 2022.”

According to recent reporting, ASL executive director Margaret Byfield was in regular contact with a top aide to Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, about developing a strategy to oppose the 30x30 plan, including legislative strategy. In one email she wrote, “we believe states and local governments need to speak out about this.” She continued, “land ownership and management should not be dictated from Washington, D.C. but should be determined at the local level.”

Additionally, Byfield functioned as a liaison between Governor Rickett’s office and U.S. Representative Lauren Boebert by “requesting and apparently securing a statement from Ricketts in support of Boebert’s legislation aimed at blocking the Biden 30x30 pledge.”

In May 2021, Accountable.US [called on the IRS](#) to investigate ASL for similar violations of its tax-exempt status, noting that a thorough review of the group’s “activities shows substantial lobbying and a primary objective that may be attained only by legislation or defeat of proposed legislation.” The initial request also noted that “although ASL’s current lobbying focus appears to be on opposing the 30x30 conservation target, its website claims other ‘victories’ that appear to have been significant lobbying programs.”

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