

## **Newly Appointed Senator Pete Ricketts Is A Mouthpiece For Anti-Lands Extremists And Grifters.**

**SUMMARY:** Following Senator Ben Sasse's retirement, Nebraska's new governor appointed his predecessor, Pete Ricketts, to take over Sasse's seat. Ricketts already announced plans to run for the seat in the 2024 special election and 2026 election.

As governor, Pete Ricketts was in the pocket of extremist land opponents and conspiracy theorists American Stewards of Liberty (ASoL). The group directly influenced the governor's anti-conservation policies, making direct suggestions to executive orders from Rickett's office.

And who is American Stewards of Liberty? The group fights conservation and spews conspiracy theories about government "control." Meanwhile, ASoL goes county to county in the west squeezing taxpayer funds out of counties through fear mongering on property rights.

Pete Ricketts' work with ASoL extended from his office to hosting an anti-30x30 summit in Lincoln, Nebraska filled to the brim with grifters and extremists. The event gave the then-governor's seal of approval to baseless claims of "taking your children's mind and future" and climate change denial.

## **Former Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts Is Poised To Fight Against Conservation And Continue Catering To Conspiracy Theorists And Scammers.**

### **Former Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts Was Appointed To The US Senate To Replace Retired Sen. Ben Sasse.**

Former Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts Was Appointed To Fill The Seat Of Retired Senator Ben Sasse Through 2024. "Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen has appointed Pete Ricketts, the state's former GOP governor, to fill retired Sen. Ben Sasse's seat through 2024." [*Politico*, [01/12/23](#)]

### **Ricketts Already Pledged To Run For The Seat In The 2024 Special Election And In 2026.**

"Ricketts, who served two terms and endorsed Pillen in the race to replace him last year, will run in a special election next fall to fill out the remaining two years of Sasse's Senate term. Ricketts said on Thursday that he is committed to running for the seat in both 2024 and 2026." [*Politico*, [01/12/23](#)]

### **When Pete Ricketts Was Governor, His Anti-Conservation Policies Were Directly Influenced By Extremist American Stewards Of Liberty.**

*Governor Pete Ricketts Included Suggestions Made By Margaret Byfield In His Anti-30x30 Executive Order.*

**May 27, 2021: Margaret Byfield Emailed Taylor Gage Regarding Coordination With States And 30x30 And Recommending Additional Provisions Be Included In Gov. Ricketts' Executive Order.**

“I’ve been giving more thought... and was thinking this would be an ideal vehicle to required [sic] the Biden Administration “coordinate” with the State on 30 x 30. [...] This is something we need to explore and see if a provision taking advantage of the language should be worked into the Governor’s EO. I’m attaching the Order below and happy to talk more about this. [...] Happy to visit about the coordination concept in the EO if you think it is worth pursuing.” [FOIA Response RR-0006371, Group 2, page 21, accessed [08/03/21](#)]

- **In Her Email, Byfield Referenced Past Conversations With The Governor’s Office.** “In every place that Congress has directed the Federal agencies to coordinate with local governments, they have also directed they coordinate with the States. I’ve been thinking on how best to utilize it in the proposed EO since our last conversation.” [FOIA Response RR-0006371, Group 2, page 21, accessed [08/03/21](#)]
- **Taylor Gage Forwarded The Email To Matt Miltenberger.** “FYI on NEPA” [FOIA Response RR-0006371, Group 2, page 21, accessed [08/03/21](#)]
- **Matt Miltenberger Is Gov Ricketts’ Chief Of Staff.** [Office Of Governor Pete Ricketts, Cabinet, accessed [08/03/21](#)]

**June 14, 2021: Governor Pete Ricketts Issued An Executive Order Including Language On Coordination With The State.** “The Nebraska Department of Agriculture Director is hereby designated as Nebraska’s State Coordinator for the Climate Task Force recently established by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) in Secretarial Order No. 2299 Section 4(b)(2). The Governor’s Office shall notify DOI of the designation and reserves the right to change the designation at any time.” [Gov Pete Ricketts Executive Order No. 21-08, [06/24/21](#)]

*Governor Ricketts Signed On To And Authored Anti-30x30 Letters Following Suggestions From Margaret Byfield.*

**March 8, 2021: Margaret Byfield Sent Taylor Gage An Email Laying Out Information For Their Upcoming Meeting And Suggesting Gov Ricketts Lead A Letter Opposing 30x30.** “I’m attaching two documents for you to review and some additional thoughts for your consideration prior to our meeting on Wednesday. [...] We would like to ask the Governor to consider taking similar action appropriate from the State. One suggestion has been for the Governor to lead a letter to President Biden laying out the concerns of the Stat signed by other Governors.” [FOIA Response RR-0006371, Group 5, page 69-70, accessed [08/04/21](#)]

- **April 21, 2021: Gov Pete Ricketts Signed On To A Letter To President Biden Opposing 30x30.** “On January 27, 2021, your Administration issued Executive Order 14008 (“Order”), “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad” (86 Fed. Reg. ,619). Included at Section 216 of the Order, the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture and other senior officials, was directed to develop a program to conserve at least 30 percent of the lands and waters in the Untied States by 2030. [...] It is precisely because we depend on our lands to be available for future generations to enjoy and use, without greater unput into this initiative, we must resist implementation of the 30 x 30 program.” [Joint Letter To President Biden On 30 x 30 Program, [04/21/21](#)]

**May 5, 2021: Margaret Byfield Emailed Taylor Gage Conveying A Request From Rep Lauren Boebert's Office For A Comment From Gov Ricketts Supporting Her "30 X 30 Termination Act."**

"Jeff Small, Rep. Boeberts [sic] Chief of Staff would like to have a statement of support from the governor for the "30 x 30 Termination Act" she is planning to file this Friday. Would this be possible to do? If so, you can send it to me or to Jeff directly (his email is below)." [FOIA Response RR-0006371, Group 4, page 89, accessed [08/04/21](#)]

- **Gage Replied That He Would Try His Best.** "I will review with the policy team. They are very busy in the midst of legislative session, so I can't promise a quick response. But I will try my best." [FOIA Response RR-0006371, Group 4, page 89, accessed [08/04/21](#)]
- **May 7, 2021: Rep Boebert Issued A Press Release Announcing The 30 X 30 Termination Act That Included A Quote From Gov Ricketts.** "Today, Representative Lauren Boebert (CO-03) introduced the 30 x 30 Termination Act to block the radical 30 x 30 program, a massive land grab being pursued by the Biden administration at the behest of extremist environmentalists, that seeks to lock up at least 30% of all lands and waters in the U.S. by 2030. [...] Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts: "Thank you to Congresswoman Boebert and everyone who is stepping up to stop President Biden's radical climate agenda and the 30 x 30 plan. It will take an all-hands-on-deck effort to stop the Biden-Harris Administration. They are attempting to undermine the prerogative of states and private landowners to manage their land and natural resources. Together, we can push back on federal overreach and protect our way of life."" [Rep Lauren Boebert, Press Release, [05/07/21](#)]

*According To Records Provided By The Governor's Office, Since President Biden Took Office 30x30 Was Not Mentioned Prior To Taylor Gage And Margaret Byfield's Introduction.*

**February 17, 2021: Tanya Storer Connected Margaret Byfield With Taylor Gage To Set Up A Meeting Between Byfield And Gov Ricketts.** "Good afternoon Margaret [...] I spoke with my friend a colleague Taylor Gage on Sunday regarding the 30x30 and LWCF order and told him I would introduce the two of you this way so you could speak directly about a possible meeting with the Governor while you are in Nebraska next month. Taylor is the Governors communication director and has worked with both Sherry and I on similar issues in the past." [FOIA Response RR-0006371, Group 5, page 67, accessed [08/04/21](#)]

*February 17, 2021 marks the first mention of 30x30 in the records provided by the governor's office. The records request called for any mention of 30x30 starting on January 20, 2021.*

**American Stewards Of Liberty Spreads Conspiracy Theories While Gifting Counties Out Of Taxpayer Funds.**

*American Stewards Of Liberty Has Pushed Extremist And Conspiracy Theories.*

**American Stewards Of Liberty Warns That The 30 x 30 Plan's Goal Is "Moving Us From A Nation Founded On Private Property Principles To One Controlled By The Administrative State."** "The 30 x 30 program is a plan advanced by radical environmental activists to permanently protect 30% of America's land and oceans by 2030. The program is being advanced by the Biden Administration through Executive Order 14008,

“Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad” (86 Fed. Reg. 7,619), signed January 27, 2021.” [American Stewards Of Liberty, accessed [03/24/21](#)]

- **American Stewards Spokesperson Trent Loos Says 30 X 30 “Was Previously Known As Agenda 21.”** “For those that are not aware, on Jan. 27, 2021, President Joe Biden signed Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad [...] For the most part, it explains how we will move away from fossil fuels but also says we will move into 30% of land and water in the nation being used to mitigate climate change by the year 2030. For the record, this madness was previously known as Agenda 21 and Agenda 30 is now officially 30 x 30 until they bump it to 50 x 50.” [High Plains Journal, [04/17/21](#)]

**The Attendee Explained That The Stalin Government Took Control Of Agricultural Land And Therefor Food.** “Those people starved. They solved millions of them. It’s very similar to what’s happening in this country. The government is trying to take the land away from the people now. When they do that’ they’ll have control of the land, and they’ll have control of us, because they’ll have control of the food. [...] [SD Trumpet - Facebook, [4/20/21](#) (1:38:22)]

- **Byfield Agreed Unequivocally, Saying “That’s What I See Coming.”** Byfield Told The Man That Margaret Byfield said, “I agree. That’s what I see coming if we don’t stop it. That’s exactly what I see coming.” [SD Trumpet - Facebook, [4/20/21](#) 01:39:20]

**Trent Loos Said There Were Parallels Between 30 X 30 And “Hitler” In Addition To The Holodomor.** Trent Loos said at an American Stewards of Liberty said, “We’ve just been trying to peel that – Margaret’s term – peel that onion back as the federal government to remove that property right, which comes back to everything you’re talking about. I can draw those parallels to the Ukraine. I can draw those parallels to Hitler from ‘33 to ‘39. But history does repeat itself.” [SD Trumpet - Facebook, [4/20/21](#) 01:52:13]

- **Trent Loos Made Comparisons Between Environmental Protection Laws And Hitler In Announcement Of His Participation In Meetings Hosted By American Stewards Of Liberty.** “The only true green approach to the future of planet health lies in humans with property rights driving the decision-making process, determining what is best for the land and their family. No easement spew or Heritage Area designation is going to continue the environmental progress that has been made by the men that own and respect the land. We can implement all of the endangered species laws we want to, just like Hitler did, but the bald eagle thrives today because of landowners that provide habitat, not government bureaucrats. In the next month I will be a part of meetings hosted by the American Stewards of Liberty that are designed to empower folks. I hope to see you somewhere along that truly green trail.” [High Plains Journal - Op Ed by Trent Loos, [4/3/21](#)]

*American Stewards Of Liberty Took Hundreds Of Thousands Of Dollars From Counties.*

**Utah Counties Have Paid ASoL Nearly A Half A Million Dollars For Consulting And Legal Services Over Public Lands Issues.** “Utah’s Kane County has handed nearly half a million dollars in recent years to a Texas-based nonprofit for consulting and legal services regarding

public land management. The spending comes on top of the millions it has spent litigating legal claims based on 'R.S. 2477,' a frontier-era law that allowed counties to own roads built across public land." [Salt Lake Tribune, [05/14/21](#)]

**Chaves County, New Mexico, Has Paid ASoL Over \$185,000 For Advice On Land Management And Endangered Species Issues.** "Chaves County has paid \$185,000 since 2016 to the American Stewards of Liberty for contracts to advise on land management and endangered species issues." [Albuquerque Journal, [03/15/22](#)]

**Cherry County Nebraska Hired Margaret Byfield, Of ASoL, For \$1,500 A Month To Consult On Zoning Regulations In 2021.** The county's minutes read, "the board had a zoom call with Margaret Byfield about becoming a secondary consultant for the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Regulations update that they are currently working on with Keith Marvin. Margaret will be helping in the areas of Conservation Easements, endangered species and wetlands protection plus others as needed. She told the board that they work with boards two ways \$100/hour or \$1500/month. Discuss/ Act on hiring Margaret Byfield as a Secondary Consultant... Duane made a motion to hire Margaret Byfield as a Secondary Consultant at the \$100/hour rate and if need to change to the \$1500/month... Motion carried 5-0." [Co.cherry.ne.us, [06/08/21](#)]

**Modoc County Was One Of Six Counties Which Hired ASoL For A Lawsuit Against The BLM.** "Six Western counties and a soil and water conservation district filed a lawsuit in federal court Dec. 12 seeking to nullify a new rule governing Bureau of Land Management decision-making. Litigants include Kane County, Utah; Big Horn County, Wyo.; Chaves County, N.M.; Custer County, Idaho; Garfield County, Colo.; Modoc County, Calif.; and New Mexico's Dona Ana Soil and Water Conservation District. American Stewards of Liberty – a private property rights organization that helps local governments coordinate with federal agencies – will manage the lawsuit, alleging the new rule improperly excludes local governments from BLM planning, affecting 175 million acres in 11 Western states." [Capital Press, [12/13/16](#)]

- **Byfield Estimated The Lawsuit Would Cost \$300K, And "Established A Special Account For Legal Fund Donations."** "Byfield anticipates the new rule will result in "more decisions based on the environmental agenda and those that oppose productive use of the resources." She said three counties will shoulder most of the estimated \$300,000 in legal fees, but she's established a special account for legal fund donations." [Capital Press, [12/13/16](#)]

### **Alongside American Stewards Of Liberty, Pete Ricketts Hosted An Anti-30x30 Summit Filled With Climate Denial, Conspiracy Theories, And Public Land Opponents.**

**Governor Pete Ricketts Hosted A "Stop 30 x 30" Event To Oppose Conservation Policy With The Group American Stewards of Liberty In Lincoln This Month.** "The program is set to open with a keynote presentation from the Summit host, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts. Governor Ricketts led the letter signed by 15 Governors opposing 30x30 last year, and has continued to actively oppose the agenda, protecting Nebraskans from the federal overreach." [American Stewards of Liberty, accessed [04/12/22](#)]

*American Stewards of Liberty Director Margaret Byfield Said There Is No Climate Crisis—It's A Ruse For Big Government To Get "Control Of Our Land"*

**Margaret Byfield Says Schools Are "Indoctrinating" People To Believe There Is A Climate Crisis.** "Our school system is indoctrinating our people to believe this climate, this climate crisis, which is not existent. It is all designed to get control of our land and therefore our liberty." [ASL Summit Audio File 13, 04/22/22] [02:22]

*CFACT President Craig Rucker Said That 30x30 Is Rooted In Agenda 21, Which He Insists Is "Not A Conspiracy Theory."*

**Rucker Says Agenda 21 Is "Not A Hoax" And Is Reflected In 30 x 30.** (20:36) "What's the big deal? The big deal is the UN under Maurice Strong in 92 thought these were wonderful. And he incorporated them into various treaties. Four big treaties came out with this, the framework on climate change, convention on biological diversity, the convention to combat desertification, and Agenda 21. I'll just mention two very briefly- First, Agenda 21 is not a hoax. You always see headlines like this. Others say it's a conspiracy theory. There isn't any. It's not a conspiracy theory. [...] (21:55) Some of the text in Agenda 21 kind of reflects what you're seeing right now in 30 x 30. For example, one thing is they want to have studies and methods to identify components of biological diversity. How's that sound compared to your atlas? Right? Nations should conduct studies." [ASL Summit Audio File 11, 04/22/22] (20:36)

*US Rep. Lauren Boebert Said People Who Support Conservation "Want To Take Your Children's Mind And Future."*

**Rep Boebert Said 30x30 Is About "Complete And Total Control."** "Here they are saying 30 by 30 and telling you that's just a little bit. But it is in the direction of 50 by 50. They want complete and total control." [ASL Summit Audio File 10, 04/22/22] [2:18]

**Rep Boebert Said Supporters Of 30x30 Want To Take Your "Children's Mind And Future."** "They want to take your land. They want to take your water. They want to take your children's mind and future. They want your money." [ASL Summit Audio File 10, 04/22/22] [3:00]

*And A County Commissioner From Montana Said There Is A "Marxist Move" Afoot To "Get Us Off The Land."*

Fergus County Commissioner Ross Butcher Said That Conservation Organization Buying Land In Montana Was A "Marxist Move." "In my view, it is a Marxist move, to get us off the land, and to control us." [ASL Summit Audio File 07, 04/22/22] [01:50]

*Cherry County Commissioner Tanya Storer Compared Conservation Easements To Abortion.*

**To Rationalize Why She Opposes Property Owners' Rights To Put Their Own Property Into An Easement, Cherry County Commissioner Tanya Storer Said Conservation Easements Are Like Abortions.** 25:15 Cherry County Commissioner Tanya Storer compares conservation easements to abortion. ""The other thing I just want to add really quick is a lot of you are going to hear this, I've heard it over and over from a lot of my fellow conservatives that say, 'Well, Tanya, if you're pro private property rights how can you deny easement as a property right?' And my response to that is, it's legal - those abortions - but I can't support, and I will work to make sure we change the law, so it is no longer available. Because it's the only instrument that I'm aware of that, in essence, destroys private property rights." [ASL Summit Audio File 03, 04/22/22] [25:15]

*Rep. Boebert Said Joked That Climate Change "Happens Four Times Every Year."*

**Rep Boebert Dismissed Climate Change As Nothing More Than The Seasons.** "They've moved on from climate change. It's now an extinction crisis that they're pushing on people. And now, I don't want to go too hard against climate change. I'm fine with going on the record in front of all of you today saying climate change is absolutely real. It happens four times every year." [ASL Summit Audio File 10, 04/22/22] [9:27]

**The Heartland Institute James Taylor Said Nothing Should be Done to Curb or Slow the Effects on the N Climate Crisis as he Believes "There is no Global Warming Crisis."** "I don't care what their scientists say, I care what the data says. And when people say 'let's have conservative solutions to global warming' ...we're still funneling resources away from things that matter to fight an imaginary crisis and we're giving them an excuse to launch programs like 30x30. There is no global warming crisis." [ASL Summit Audio File 12, 04/22/2022] [18:00]

*Boebert Said That The US Government Had An "Addiction" To Taking Peoples' Land, Which She Compared To Hunter Biden.*

**Rep Boebert Compared Public Land Protections With Addiction And Ridiculed Hunter Biden's History With Addiction.** "And remember. When we're talking about the federal government taking all of this land - whether it be 30%, 50%, 70 or 100 - you don't stop an addict by continuing to let them rob you. You don't stop an addict by continuing to fuel that addiction. And this isn't a jab at Hunter Biden, but you have to say no." [ASL Summit Audio File 10, 04/22/22] [16:42]