SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3– COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Referred to Committee on Natural Resources

SUMMARY-Urges Congress to provide funding to reduce the

wild horse and burro populations to appropriate management levels. (BDR R-465)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: No. Effect on the State: No.

EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ______ [omitted material] is material to be omitted.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION—Urging Congress to provide funding to reduce the wild horse and burro populations to appropriate management levels.

1 WHEREAS, The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of

2 1971, as amended, ensured free-roaming horses and burros existing

3 on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management or U.S.

4 Forest Service in 1971 would be protected and managed as valued

- 5 components of our public lands; and
- 6 WHEREAS, Their range was to be sufficient to sustain herds,
- 7 while ensuring a thriving natural ecological balance with wildlife,
- 8 livestock and other public lands uses in accordance with the
- 9 Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960; and
- 10 WHEREAS, The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of
- 11 1971 directed the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest
- 12 Service to determine, in consultation with wildlife agencies, the
- 13 appropriate management level of free-roaming horses and burros to
- 14 retain a thriving natural ecological balance of the habitat, forage and
- 15 water needs of wildlife, livestock and free-roaming horses and
- burros through the assessment of plant and riparian sustainability;and
- 18 WHEREAS, Once over the appropriate management level,
- 19 numbers of free-roaming horses and burros were defined as excess

20 to the carrying capacity of the land; and

1 WHEREAS, The Bureau of U.S.

Forest Service have used and do use various public processes to set 2 3 and adjust the appropriate management level on a herd-by-herd 4 basis including, without limitation, resource management plans, 5 land management plans and multiple-use decisions, which are 6 typically analyzed in accordance with the requirements of the 7 National Environmental Policy Act; and 8 WHEREAS, In Nevada, water comprises a mere 2 percent of our 9 public lands in the form of scattered springs, small streams and 10 ephemeral playas, and is essential for the survival of wildlife, 11 livestock and free-roaming horses and burros alike; and WHEREAS, An appropriate management level determination 12 13 must include the level of functionality of those small riparian areas 14 and water sources on which all living things on public lands depend; 15 and 16 WHEREAS, In order to assist in achieving the thriving natural 17 ecological balance mandate, the Bureau of Land Management and 18 the U.S. Forest Service should remove excess free-roaming horses 19 and burros by making them available for adoption or placing them 20 in short-term or long-term holdings, such as lifetime pastures, or 21 treating them with fertility inhibitors and returning them to public 22 lands: and 23 WHEREAS, Nevada hosts over 50 percent of all free-roaming 24 horses and burros on our semi-arid and arid Great Basin and Mojave 25 Desert lands: and 26 WHEREAS, In Nevada, the appropriate management level 27 necessary to ensure a thriving natural ecological balance was 28 determined to be a total of 12,800 horses and burros in the state's 83 29 Herd Management Areas; and 30 WHEREAS, Today in Nevada, the Herd Management Areas are 31 on average 300 percent over the appropriate management level, with 32 50,000 free-roaming horses and burros on Bureau of Land 33 Management lands and 2,500 on U.S. Forest Service lands; and 34 WHEREAS, Some Herd Management Areas have populations at 35 thousands of percent above the appropriate management level; and 36 WHEREAS, In addition, there are approximately 5,500 other feral 37 or estray horses and burros in areas outside of the jurisdiction of the 38 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971, including on 39 state, tribal and military lands; and 40 WHEREAS, Free-roaming horse and burro populations double 41 every 3 to 5 years; and

42 WHEREAS, The populations of free-roaming horses and burros

- that are above the appropriate management level of the last 43 4
- decades have, in many areas, impacted ecosystem health as well as habitat, forage and water resources, which imperils the health and 44
- 45

livestock, vegetation, and

well-being of wildlife, 1 free-roaming

horses and burros themselves: and 2 3 WHEREAS, Inadequate, short-term congressional Bureau of Land 4 Management budget allocations have prevented the effective 5 removal of excess free-roaming horses and burros required for healthy ecosystems and resulted in additional problems including 6 7 insufficient pasture and holding facilities, an absence of logistically effective long-term fertility inhibitors, and populations above the 8 9 appropriate management level that are growing exponentially; and 10 WHEREAS, In 2019, wildlife and livestock welfare organizations including the Humane Society of the United States and the 11 12 American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals collaboratively crafted a plan, "The Path Forward for Management 13 of BLM's Wild Horses & Burros," proposing a pathway to reduce 14 15 free-roaming horse and burro populations to the appropriate 16 management level using non-lethal methods; and 17 WHEREAS, The underpinnings of this plan became part of the 18 Bureau of Land Management's 2020 "Report to Congress: An Analysis of Achieving a Sustainable Wild Horse & Burro Program," 19 20 which hinged on requiring sufficient short and longer-term funding 21 for success: and WHEREAS, The work of "Wild Horse Annie" (Velma Johnston), 22 23 which assisted in the passage of the Wild and Free-Roaming Wild 24 Horse and Burro Act of 1971, is failing to achieve the goals which 25 were made in good faith of ensuring a place for free-roaming horses 26 and burros on public lands, while retaining a thriving natural 27 ecological balance: and 28 WHEREAS, This thriving natural ecological balance needs to be 29 restored as quickly as possible; now, therefore, be it 30 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF 31 NEVADA, JOINTLY, That the members of the 81st Session of the 32 Nevada Legislature support the humane and science-based management of Nevada's wild free-roaming horse and burro populations Bureau of Land Management's 2020 Report to Congress urging sufficient short-term funding for 33 34 immediate effectiveness and longer-term funding for sustained 35 efficacy and overall success, apportioned according to free-roaming horses and burros numbers in each state; and be it further 36 37 RESOLVED, That given the impacts of excess free-roaming horses and burros on our fragile Great Basin and Mojave 38 39 ecosystems, the members of the 81st Session of the Nevada 40 Legislature support reducing excess free-roaming horses and burros

- 41 to achieve the appropriate _____ management level, using non-lethal
- 42 means and prioritizing humane fertility control, as recommended by the National Academy of Sciences within 6 years to protect and restore the health and viability
- 43 of our public lands and habitats for wildlife, free-roaming horses
- and burros and other uses into the future; and be it further

- 1 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and
- 2 transmit a copy of this resolution to the Vice President of the United
- 3 States as the presiding officer of the Senate, the Speaker of the
- 4 House of Representatives and each member of the Nevada
- 5 Congressional Delegation; and be it further
- 6 RESOLVED, That this resolution becomes effective upon 7 passage.

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