



**Testimony in Support
HB23-1066**

Good afternoon, my name is Bryan Gwinn and I'm an attorney from Denver. I'm a partner with Volant Law LLC – which is real estate law firm in Englewood. I'm also a hunter and outdoorsman and am here today on behalf of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers to lend support to HB-1066.

Backcountry Hunter and Anglers – or BHA – is a non-profit and non-partisan voice for our wild public lands, waters, and wildlife. BHA seeks to ensure that North America's heritage of hunting and fishing outdoors in a natural setting is honored and protected. We have over 350,000 members ... chapters in 48 states (with Colorado being the 2nd largest chapter) – and our members are sportsmen and women across the political spectrum who live in YOUR districts and are dedicated to preserving the right of every American – ALL Americans – to access PUBLIC lands.

In fact, one of BHA's most recognized slogans is "Keep Public Lands in Public Hands" – "Keep Public Lands in Public Hands"

Unfortunately, a chain of uncoordinated and isolated decisions & policies dating from the 1800s has had unintended consequences on our landscape. One of which is that public and private parcels often appear like a checkerboard on the map. Whether a person can act like a checker-*piece* and step from the black to the black, or the red to the red – known as "corner crossing" - has been largely untested legally and has created a situation where the legal status of corner crossing is ambiguous at best.

For various reasons – be it changing land use practices, better mapping technology, the decline of working ranches who would otherwise accommodate public access, or maybe the fact that we all now carry a blue dot on our phone that shows us exactly where the boundaries are – the question of whether you can cross a corner is a hot topic in the outdoor community. It may sound like an esoteric issue here

on capital hill but I guarantee our members and the larger outdoor community in the western states are keenly aware of the consequences of this legislation.

BHA's position is that ***no private individual*** should have the right to restrict the ***public-at large*** from public land.

We support HB1066 because it simply says "yes, you can step from public land to public land over a corner" – you *can* move like a checker piece – yes you can do that. The bill does not authorize trespassing and it protects private land ownership and leaves in-tact all civil and criminal penalties for trespass. It simply tells a member of the public – a hunter, an angler, a backpacker – that they CAN cross a corner. But the burden remains on that member of the public TO DO IT RIGHT, or risk the consequences.

We reject a voluntary system of access where private interests serve as self-appointed gate-keepers for whether the public gets to enjoy public land. And this is the *de facto* system that exists – with Colorado having **101,000** acres of public land blocked by private interests.

The system isn't working and we need a solution to this problem. HB 1066 provides the answer by giving legislative clarity to private interests, landowners, law enforcement, you, me, and all members of the public by saying you can simply step from one piece of public land to another.

This is a bi-partisan issue. This is an All-American Issue. This land IS your land. So please ... KEEP Public Lands in Public Hands.

I thank you for your time and consideration and ask that you pass this measure out of committee and continue to work with Rep. Bradley and across the aisle for ultimate passage of this bill.