AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY
MICHIGAN

Oct. 11, 2011

Committee on Natural Resources, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation
The Honorable Frank Foster
Anderson House Office Building
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48909

A letter in support of Senate Bill 248

Dear Chairman Foster and distinguished Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the 65,000 members of Americans for Prosperity-Michigan, I write in support of Senate Bill 248, which would establish limits on government ownership of property. We believe the constraints on government ownership of property encompassed in this legislation are long overdue.

SB 248 strikes a very reasonable balance between current property ownership and future purchasing ability and asset allocation by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). According to the DNR, 20 percent of Michigan's total land area is currently owned and managed as public land by either the federal, state or local governments. The total land under control of the DNR totals 4.5 million acres, or 12 percent of the total State land area. In addition to these percentages, many other properties that are not managed as public lands are owned by governmental entities.

AFP-Michigan finds it surprising and inappropriate that 1 out of every 5 acres of land in our state falls under the control of government. Private property rights and respect for private property are among the core principles upon which our country was founded. As written in the Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776, these rights are rooted in the claim that "all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights," one of which is "the means of acquiring and possessing property."

Hundreds of years later, our culture and society continues to uphold the value of private property ownership. Government ownership of land is a de facto limit on personal property rights. For this reason, it is reasonable to discuss how much land government currently owns and how much it should be allowed to own.

Senate Bill 248 places reasonable limits on the ability of Michigan's executive branch to consume a larger and larger share of a limited commodity, that is, private land. More importantly, it establishes an important precedent that the people, as represented by the legislative branch, have a role in setting limits on land ownership by their government.

AFP-Michigan respectfully urges a "Yes" vote on Senate Bill 248.

Sincerely,

Scott Hagerstrom
Michigan State Director
Americans for Prosperity