

Oh, Utah! When will you learn?

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A new video released by Utah Gov. Spencer Cox argues the big, semi-annual trade show called Outdoor Retailer should come back to Salt Lake City. This is despite opposition from leading brands, resorts like mine in Aspen and many nonprofit groups over the state's environmental policies.

Oh, Utah! Will you ever learn? You can't have the things you love like clean air, wild lands and a stable climate and destroy them at the same time. You can't roll back historic land conservation practices and hope your state will seem welcoming to hikers, climbers, fishers and skiers.

The 2017 move to Colorado occurred for two reasons: First, the outdoor companies selling their tents, sleeping bags, hiking boots and backpacks didn't want to do business in a state that was willfully and actively opposing protection of the very landscapes in which customers use those products. Yet elected officials were attempting to dismantle the Grand Staircase Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments.

Second, outdoor industry leaders didn't want to celebrate commerce in a state whose lawmakers were mostly opposed to acting on the very thing threatening that commerce — climate change. A few years ago, the

Guardian reports, the Utah legislature passed a resolution urging the EPA to “cease its carbon dioxide reduction policies, programs, and regulations until climate data and global warming science are substantiated.”

You can’t politically ignore, or slow-walk, action on climate change that is flooding, baking and burning cities and streams, mountains and fields, and expect businesses dependent on outdoor recreation to flock to your state. You have to care. And to act.

Emerald Expositions, which owns and produces the event, has to realize that outdoor brands are not environment-agnostic anymore. The show that produces \$56 million in revenue is about business, but business more than ever requires protecting the environment.

Don’t get me wrong. I love Utah. I have fond memories of skiing in the Wasatch and I love the people, the landscapes, the rivers and the spirit.

But Utah politics leaves me flat. Here in Colorado, we’re pioneering new laws to cut methane pollution and drive EV adoption; to rein-in Hydrofluorocarbons and clean up our utility grid. We’ve got robust public lands protections and aggressive environmental leadership from the governor, both senators and both houses of the legislature.

Electric vehicles hit almost 13 percent of market share in December, a few years after Colorado became the only state in the central U.S. to adopt California’s Zero Emissions Vehicles standard. We’re not perfect, but we’re the kind of place where businesses and government together recognize that they need to protect the landscape, and the climate, on which their economic success is based.

Some things change, others don’t. President Trump gutted the Grand Staircase Escalante and Bear Ears monuments, with Utah’s support. President Biden reinstated them.

Utah lawmakers moved off the dime on climate, commissioning a study called the “Utah Roadmap,” with a goal of reducing CO2 emissions by half over the next decade. Whether action will follow that analysis remains to be seen. As for the two monuments, state officials have engaged lawyers to sue the federal government over their restoration. Tribes, tired of their lands being used as a political football, are preparing to counter-sue.

Until Utah begins to understand these things that matter, the Outdoor Retailer show needs to stay somewhere that does.

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