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Enviros. Oppose Utah Money for Calif. Coal Terminal

SALT LAKE CITY – Environmental advocates are [calling on Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes](#) to reject a plan to spend millions of dollars in public funds to help build a coal-shipping terminal in California.

The [organizations sent Reyes a letter](#) on Monday, asking him to block the Community Impact Board from giving \$53 million to four Utah counties – so those counties can loan the money to a private developer who wants to build the terminal in Oakland, California.

In exchange, companies operating in those counties would get shipping rights to sell Utah coal abroad, thereby bringing in more tax revenue. Aaron Paul, staff attorney with the [Grand Canyon Trust](#), says the plan goes against Utah law.

"The mineral-leasing money is supposed to be spent in Utah for the purpose of alleviating the burdens of mineral development in this state," he says. "This terminal would be used essentially for the exact opposite purpose, exacerbating the very problem the board is charged with alleviating."

The state receives royalties from oil and gas development on public lands, and by law 50 percent of those funds are supposed to go to public services in Utah.

Paul says this deal belongs in the private sector.

"You would expect private developers to pay for a project like this, which is going to really benefit private companies," he says. "If this is an attractive investment, you have to ask why the private sector is not stepping up to make that investment?"

The Community Impact Board approved the loan deal in April, but made it contingent on a legal ruling by Reyes, who has yet to issue an opinion. Calls to the attorney general's office for comment for this story were not returned.

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