

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

November 1, 2007

Dear Chairman Byrd:

As a coalition of national park partners, outdoor recreation organizations and industry associations, corporations, and national park supporters from across the country, we are writing to ask for your help with an unprecedented and important opportunity for the National Park System.

Efforts are now underway in Congress to establish a new, ten-year program to enhance the national park system, in partnership between the federal government and a wide range of non-federal philanthropic interests, in time for the National Park Centennial in 2016. When combined with the essential, significant increases in funding for Park Service operations that the Appropriations Committee has already provided, and for which we are very grateful, the new Centennial Challenge program will help ensure that the parks are fully prepared to meet the challenges of their second century. The Centennial Challenge will leverage a new federal financial commitment to create even greater philanthropic support for the parks and re-engage the American people to recognize and appreciate the shared natural, historic and cultural heritage these special places embody.

Clearly, there is strong, bipartisan interest in Congress to pass legislation to authorize the Centennial Challenge program. Despite this momentum, as is so often the case, the calendar is the enemy. Unless the authorizing legislation is passed and signed into law in the next few months, innovative and important national park centennial projects and programs, that have committed non-federal financial support, will be put on hold. In order to avoid that outcome, the FY 2008 Interior Appropriations bill, passed by the House, included \$50 million in start up money for the Centennial Challenge under existing authority. We are asking for your support to include the \$50 million Centennial Challenge start-up money in the final FY 2008 Interior spending bill. While we will continue to work to enact Centennial Challenge authorizing legislation, the start up money is a needed bridge to allow the program to begin this year.

We have always appreciated your leadership and unwavering support for the National Parks. We look forward to working with you on this historic opportunity on their behalf.

Sincerely,

Scot Faulkner, President, Friends of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Rebecca Rimel, President & CEO, Pew Charitable Trusts

Greg Moore, Executive Director, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Paul Rosa, Director, Harpers Ferry Conservancy

Bob Hansen, President, Yosemite Fund

Chesley Moroz, President & CEO, Eastern National

Tom Kiernan, President, National Parks Conservation Association

Sharon Cruikshank, Director, New River Convention and Visitors Bureau

Fiona Laird, SVP Human Resources & Communications, Unilever Americas

Curt Buchholtz, Executive Director, Rocky Mountain Nature Association

Derrick Crandall, President, American Recreation Coalition

Bob Marshall, Public Lands Committee Chairman, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

William H. Meadows, President, The Wilderness Society

LeAnn Simpson, Executive Director & CEO, Western National Parks Association

David J. Guy, CEO, Yosemite Association

Donna Asbury, Executive Director, Association of Partners for Public Lands

Richard Moe, President, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Sally Jewell, President & CEO, REI

Leslie Mattson-Emerson, President, Grand Teton National Park Foundation

Frank Hugelmeyer, President, Outdoor Industry Association

Marla O'Byrne, President, Friends of Acadia

Cory Counard MacNulty, Executive Director, Voyageurs National Park Association

Bill Wade, Chair of the Executive Council, Coalition of National Park Service Retirees

W. Kent Olson, Retired President & CEO, Friends of Acadia

Nancy Downer, Executive Director, Joshua Tree National Park Association

Maryjo Garre, President, Garden Club of America

Mark Singleton, Chairman, Outdoor Alliance

Paul DoBell, Executive Director, Petrified Forest Museum Association, Inc.

Karen Eccles, Executive Director, Cabrillo National Monument Foundation  
Roger Dow, President & CEO, Travel Industry Association

Anna Ziegler, President, Friends of the New River Gorge National River Inc.

Denise Hight, Operations Manager, Colorado National Monument Association

Charles A. Money, Executive Director, Alaska Natural History Association

George Rutherford, President, Jefferson County, WV NAACP

Jim Petruzzi, Executive Director, Point Reyes National Seashore Association

John J. Reynolds, Board of Directors, Association of Partners for Public Lands

David Blacker, Executive Director, Death Valley Natural History Association

Courtney Lyons-Garcia, Executive Director, Friends of Big Bend National Park

David Brown, Executive Director, America Outdoors

David Startzell, Executive Director, Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Debbie Wilson, Executive Director, Lewis & Clark National Park Association

Linda Appanaitis, Executive Director, Redwood Park Association

Steve Baldwin, Executive Director, Black Hills Parks & Forests Association

David A. Grove, Executive Director & CEO, Jefferson National Parks Association

Mike Boren, Executive Director, Big Bend Natural History Association

Jeff Allen, Executive Director, Crater Lake National Park Trust

Kay Parish, Executive Director, Friends of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park

Adam Webster, Interim Director, West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Katie Nyberg, Executive Director, Mississippi River Fund

Susan Chandoha, Executive Director, Los Compadres de San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

Kathleen O'Connor, President, Minute Man National Park Association

Secretary Michael Hayden, Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks and President, Kansas Park Trust, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

Louise Carlin, Executive Director, Kansas Park Trust, Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

Matthew Logan, President, C&O Canal Trust

Eleanor Kittelson, Executive Director, Washington's National Park Fund

Joe Fassler, Chairman, National Park Hospitality Association

Joe Kessler, President, Friends of Virgin Islands National Park

Tom Cove, President & CEO, Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association

Deb Yandala, Chief Executive Officer, Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association

Don R Naimoli, Chairman, Friends of Valley Forge Park

Stephen A. Briganti, President & CEO, The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc.

Mike Molino, President, Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association

Jim Hart, President, Friends of Great Smoky Mountain National Park

Deborah Tuck, President, Grand Canyon National Park Foundation

Stan Brady, President, Friends of the Cape Cod National Seashore

Thom Dammrich, President, National Marine Manufacturers Association

Denny O'Brien, Executive Director, Acadia Partners for Science and Learning

Robert C. Wilburn, President, Gettysburg Foundation

Jason Morris, Vice President for External Affairs, Yosemite National Institutes

Dr. Stephen Lockhart, Ph.D., Chair, Yosemite National Institutes

Lee Sheaffer, President, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club

Jim Santini, Legislative Counsel, National Tour Association

Bruce Drury, President, Big Thicket Association

Pat Cole, Executive Director, Yellowstone Association

Karen Deatherage, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association

CC: The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
The Honorable Thad Cochran