



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives H-
232 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives H-
204 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Congressional Leaders:

The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) represents businesses providing necessary and appropriate visitor services in our national parks. We operate in more than 100 park units under more than 500 contracts with the federal government, providing lodging and food service, transportation and various retail outlets, services ranging from river trips to climbing expeditions and more. Our 25,000 in-park employees serve about one third of all visitors to the national parks. Last year, we provided an estimated \$1.8 billion in goods and services and, through various fees, contributed about \$150 million to the budget of the National Park Service. Concessioners in parks date back to the 1800s, predating the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. Our passion for parks is proven daily in the work of our 25,000 staff members and through our major investments in park infrastructure. Most of the lodging and other facilities we use for our operations were built with private sector investments, not appropriations. And each year, we invest in excess of \$100 million in major repairs and improvements to those facilities. We normally serve many international visitors, contributing substantially to our nation's exports.

National park concessioners are facing severe economic trauma from the coronavirus. Most of our operations are already shut down, and the likelihood of closure is high for many of the remaining operations, many of which are seasonal and being readied for opening. We believe the closures will cause a dramatic drop in visits and that visitor spending at our locations will decline by 75% or more this year. In fact, some of our operations will likely see a total loss of revenues.

The impact on park concessioners and our employees reflects the general trauma facing the nation's key travel industry but in fact we may be one of the most impacted facets of that industry.

Concessioners include US-based leaders in the hospitality field as well as hundreds of small businesses, many of whom are multi-generational providers of visitor services to park visitors. We need help. We support the assistance requests outlined by the US Travel Association and other key travel and tourism organizations to enable us to support our employees through access to SBA loans and mitigation of payroll taxes. We further request these specific actions to allow our members to survive, retain our core employees and to play an important role in the economic recovery post-pandemic:

- 1) Legislative action waiving franchise fees and rent payments connected with visitor service operations in national parks for a period of two years. Franchise fees range from 3 to 35% of our revenues but are a critical part of operational cash flows during this period. Forgiving franchise fees is key to allowing us to retain staff and to recovering when the coronavirus pandemic ends;
- 2) Legislative action extending all current concessions contracts and contract terms for two years, to allow concessioners to recover at least a portion of investments in visitor infrastructure required under our contracts and to provide any prospects for the profits specified in the legislation establishing the National Park Service concessions program. This extension will be important as we approach commercial lenders and the SBA;
- 3) Legislative action requiring and funding information and promotion activities to re-establish visitation post-pandemic in partnership with state agencies promoting. Visits to our shared legacy of parks and wildlife refuges, and forests and waters generate entrance and other recreational fees key to the budgets of federal agencies managing nearly one-third of our nation's surface and are vital to NPSA's members and the sustainability of countless gateway communities across the nation; and
- 4) Legislative action providing supplemental appropriations to the National Park Service to mitigate the loss of franchise fees and entrance fees from reduced visitation, funding essential to the safety and enjoyment of park visitors.

We look forward to discussion with you on rebuilding our economy after the impact of COVID-19. We are fortunate that America's Great Outdoors, and especially its national parks, will remain a cherished target for visits, and will be immediately available to contribute to reinvigorating the nation's economic vitality and spirit.

Sincerely,



Scott Socha

Chairman

www.parkpartners.org • 703-624-0495