

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 30, 2004

The Honorable Charles Taylor
Chairman
House Interior Appropriations
Subcommittee
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
House Interior Appropriations
Subcommittee
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2005 Interior Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide a significant increase for the operations of the National Park System (ONPS), with particular emphasis placed on increased the base operating budgets of the parks.

The Bush administration's FY 2005 requested \$1,686,067,000, an increase of \$76 million for ONPS, while a step in the right direction, will not sufficiently meet the operating needs of the parks, particularly given the tremendous strains on the base operating budgets of the 387 units that comprise the National Park System. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Interior subcommittee provide an additional \$190 million in FY 2005 for ONPS, and that you work with the Homeland Security subcommittee to obtain an additional \$50 million.

We greatly appreciate the Committee calling attention to and consistently increasing base operating funding for the parks above the president's requests. We appreciate your attention to the erosion of base budgets, citing this concern in the Committee's report accompanying the current FY 2004 Appropriations Act. This issue was also appropriately raised at the Committee's recent hearing on the Park Service's FY 2005 budget request, voiced by every member present that day.

However, while the National Park Service's operating budget has increased in recent years, it has failed to keep pace with the increasing demands placed on our parks. As you are aware, annual funding shortfalls have been exacerbated in recent years by Park Service absorption of homeland security costs, cost-of-living increases, and the rising costs of supplies, as well as several across-the-board cuts to Interior agencies.

As you formulate your FY05 budget, we believe it particularly important that you work with the Homeland Security subcommittee to secure funding the Park Service to address increased security expenditures associated with icon and border parks, as well as other parks and facilities. As you are aware, this new, unreimbursed expenditure currently comes out of park operating accounts. Homeland security costs have placed a particular financial burden on the Park Service through temporary relocation of Park Service personnel during heightened security and increased needs at our nation's icon and border parks. Every day the nation is at code orange alert, costs the Park Service an additional \$55,000 to protect the parks.

We understand the fiscal constraints facing the Committee during these tight budget times. However, the public expects America's national parks, our nation's heritage, be adequately protected and visitors educated and inspired about these natural and cultural wonders. We urge you to do all you can to provide a significant increase to the operating budget of the National Park System to meet this need.

Thank you for consideration of our request.

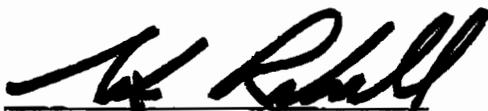
Sincerely,



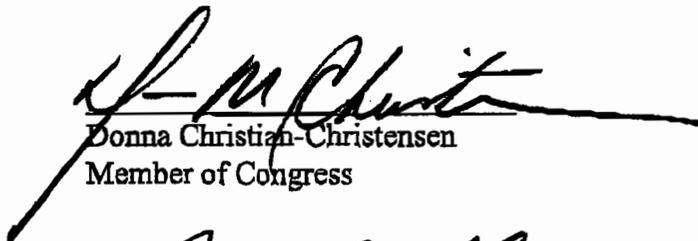
Brian Baird
Member of Congress



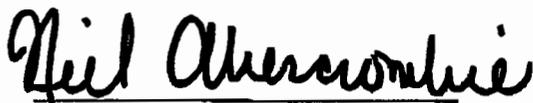
Mark Souder
Member of Congress



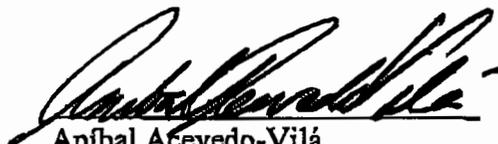
Nick Rahall
Member of Congress



Donna Christian-Christensen
Member of Congress



Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress



Anibal Acevedo-Vilá
Member of Congress



Tammy Baldwin
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Howard Berman
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Ed Case
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Danny Davis
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Richard Neal
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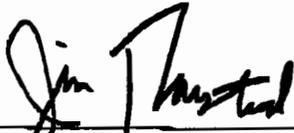
Major Owens
Major Owens
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

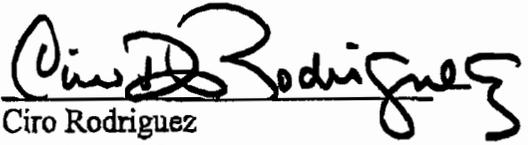
Donald Payne
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Todd Platts
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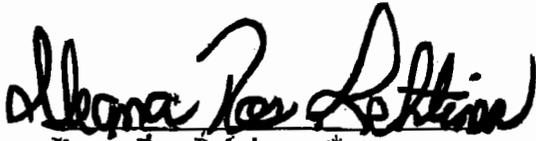
Earl Pomeroy
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Jim Ramstad
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Ciro Rodriguez
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Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
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Adam Schiff
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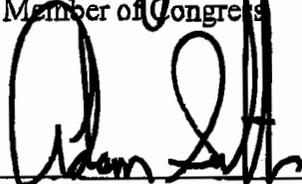


Clay Shaw
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Robert Simmons
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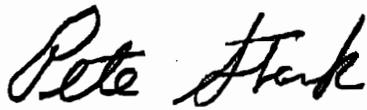
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Adam Smith
Member of Congress



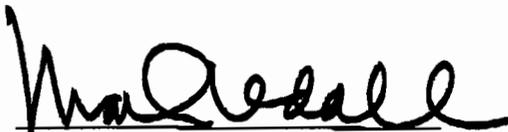
Vic Snyder
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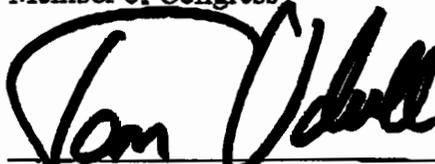
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Ellen Tauscher
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Mark Udall
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Tom Udall
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Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



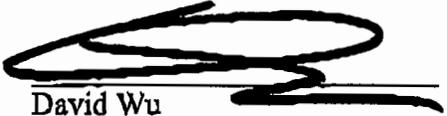
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Robert Wexler
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Lynn Woolsey
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David Wu
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Thomas Allen
Member of Congress



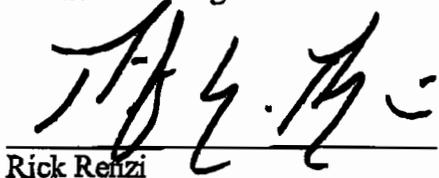
Bernard Sanders
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Joe Baca
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Anna Eshoo
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Rick Renzi
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Jim Turner
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