

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 12, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write to express our deep concern about reports that the Department of the Interior has redirected approximately \$90 million in National Park Service entrance fee revenues from national parks to fund fireworks displays and cosmetic projects in Washington, D.C. This funding is being diverted from much-needed maintenance and repairs at national parks across the country. Those who visit our parks want them maintained and improved, and these funds should not be used to pay for unnecessary projects in Washington, D.C.

The National Park System currently faces billions of dollars in deferred maintenance needs. This irresponsible use of these funds represents a troubling departure from the purpose for which these funds are collected. Americans and international travelers willingly pay park entrance fees because they expect those dollars to be reinvested in the places they visit, supporting trail repairs, campground improvements, visitor facilities, historic preservation, road maintenance, and the stewardship of some of our nation's most treasured landscapes. Visitors to places like Carlsbad Caverns, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon do not benefit from covering statues in gold leaf, spray painting a pool on the National Mall, or making bloated investments in ornamental fountains across Washington, D.C. with no-bid contracts.

Across the country, park managers are already being forced to delay critical projects due to limited resources. Redirecting tens of millions of dollars away from these needs to pay for over-the-top fireworks displays, unnecessary beautification projects, and other activities only deepens those challenges. In addition, communities across the country depend on well-maintained parks to support tourism, outdoor recreation, small businesses, and cultural heritage.


For years, Congress has worked on a bipartisan basis to reduce the National Park Service's deferred maintenance backlog, culminating in the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, signed into law by President Trump in 2020. This landmark law acknowledged the urgent need to address the National Park Service's maintenance backlog. Given that commitment, it is difficult to reconcile the redirection of park-generated revenues away from core maintenance needs and toward ornamental fountains, fireworks, and other projects in Washington, D.C.


We are also concerned by the lack of transparency surrounding these decisions. To date, the Department has not provided a clear accounting of how entrance fee revenues are being allocated


and which projects have been funded with these dollars. The public deserves to know how their park fees are being spent, and Congress cannot conduct appropriate oversight without basic information about these transactions.


We urge the Department to prioritize the needs of the National Park System, restore this funding, and ensure that visitor fee revenues are used for their intended purpose: maintaining, improving, and preserving America's national parks for future generations.


Sincerely,



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress


Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress


Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Dina Titus
Member of Congress


Joe Neguse
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Susie Lee
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