

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2026

Jessica Bowron  
Acting Director  
National Park Service (NPS)  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Acting Director Bowron:

As Members of Congress representing the Commonwealth of Virginia, we write to ask that you return to circulation a Junior Ranger Program activity book that has been reportedly taken out of circulation at Arlington House. As we approach America 250 celebrations that will center around our nation's capital, it is essential that all families and other visitors who choose to make Arlington House part of their commemoration of this important milestone have full access to educational materials created to tell the story of this important Virginia site.

Pursuant to a memo that you issued in June 2025, every NPS unit was directed to review all public signage, language, and historical resources to remove or change any that are subjectively negative about either past or living Americans. According to an NPS database, the Junior Ranger booklet was flagged for including the following line: "In 1829, Robert E. Lee promised to serve in the Army and protect the United States. In 1861, he broke his promise and fought for slavery."<sup>1</sup>

That phrase, along with the rest of the booklet, is not only historically accurate, but also important to understanding the context of the site. Robert E. Lee graduated from West Point in 1829. Upon commissioning into the United States Army, he took an oath that required him to "bear true allegiance to the United States of America" among other commitments to public service.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to that oath, he resigned from the U.S. Army in 1861, and proceeded to take up arms in a war intended to break the United States and preserve the institution of slavery.<sup>3</sup> Lee not only resigned his commission, but betrayed his oath by participating in armed rebellion against the United States government. Explaining that decision by Lee is essential to telling the story of Arlington House, which was acquired by the federal government soon after he resigned his commission and left Arlington to fight against the United States.

Given the upcoming America 250 events, we ask that you immediately return the Junior Ranger Program activity book to circulation, including all content prior to removal. Doing so will ensure that Arlington House is equipped to serve the many visitors who choose to make it part of their

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<sup>1</sup> [Confidential database reveals which items NPS thinks may 'disparage' America | Washington Post](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Oaths of Enlistment and Oaths of Office | U.S. Army Center of Military History](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Lee's Resignation | National Park Service](#); [What Twenty-First-Century Historians Have Said about the Causes of Disunion: A Civil War Sesquicentennial Review of the Recent Literature Get access Arrow | The Journal of American History](#); and [Biography: General Robert E. Lee | PBS](#)

once-in-a lifetime historical and educational events this summer, and ensure access to age-appropriate educational content.

Additionally, we request that NPS provide our offices with a full accounting of any interpretive materials, including exhibits, signage, and Junior Ranger resources, that have been removed or altered at Virginia national park units pursuant to the June 2025 memorandum, and that NPS commit to notifying our offices prior to any future such changes. Ahead of America 250, Virginia's national parks, which serve millions of visitors each year, are an invaluable resource for visitors to the Commonwealth. Any removal or significant alteration of educational materials at those sites risks undermining those sites and the complete, accurate, and historical resources they provide.

We request a commitment to meet those requests, as well as clarity on the Junior Ranger Program activity book, by June 2, 2026.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



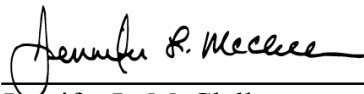
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



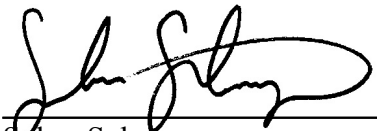
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress



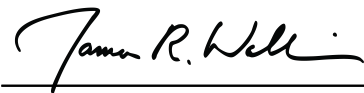
Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



Eugene Simon Vindman  
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam  
Member of Congress



James R. Walkinshaw  
Member of Congress