

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2026

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

Dear Acting Director Bowron:

We write to request that National Park Service (NPS) immediately halt implementation of new rules that levy surcharges on non-U.S.-resident visitors to national parks. We are concerned that the new rules—which impose significant new financial barriers to visiting national parks—were rolled out with insufficient notice, guidance, and public comment. We ask that NPS end the flawed roll-out of these rules to avoid damaging NPS operations, reducing visitors to national parks, and hurting our nation’s essential outdoor recreation industry.

Under the new park access rules that went into place on January 1, non-U.S. resident visitors must pay an additional \$170 surcharge on annual park passes (above the base \$80 rate) and an additional \$100 per person fee to enter 11 individual parks.¹ Going forward, nonresident visitors will pay up to triple baseline fees for passes and entry. That significant added cost will change international tourism patterns and significantly affect NPS planning and operations and outdoor recreation businesses that rely on park visitors.

Most of the 11 parks with the additional surcharges are reporting longer lines, visitor confusion and visitors cancelling their visits. This will only increase as spring and summer approach.²

In recent years, the outdoor recreation economy has accounted for more than \$1 trillion in gross economic output and more than 2% of our nation’s GDP.³ Unfortunately, these rules specifically target parks in a number of states that disproportionately contribute to our outdoor recreation industry, including Florida, Maine, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. With overseas visitation already down 3% last year⁴—and 25% from Canada—any further barriers or uncertainty that discourage visits to national parks will be a significant problem for both those states and the U.S. economy.

Those barriers will be compounded by tremendous uncertainty created by the roll-out of these rules, which were required by a July executive order but were not announced with details until

¹ [Department of the Interior Announces Modernized, More Affordable National Park Access | Department of the Interior](#)

² [How Trump’s plan to charge foreigners more is causing chaos at national parks | Washington Post](#)

³ [Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2023 | BEA](#)

⁴ [Media Release - International Visitor Entrance Surcharge for National Parks | International Inbound Travel Association](#)

late November.⁵ That is an unreasonably short implementation period for an unprecedented change to NPS' visitor fees. Operating under that timeline, NPS has:

- Not provided visitors with reasonable notice to plan around the new rules, particularly given that many international trips are planned a year to 18 months in advance.
- Not communicated a consistent plan for verifying residency that protects visitor privacy, lets employees and visitors communicate consistently even in cases of language barriers, and provides a smooth visitor experience. NPS has instead provided conflicting information to the public and employees on how it plans, or does not plan, to do so.

The burden of implementing these rules, which upend the longstanding fee structure at NPS units, has strained the Park Service's staffing capabilities that have been significantly reduced over the past year. Since January 2025, NPS's permanent workforce has been cut by 24%.⁶ Those permanent cuts have been compounded by uncertainty around seasonal hiring, with a temporary freeze last year scrambling NPS' plans for the peak of the 2025 visiting season.⁷ The result is that, despite the dedicated work of NPS employees, visitor lines at parks affected by the new rules have been long, slow, and discouraged non-residents and residents alike from visiting our nation's parks.⁸

Complicating the situation further is that the new rules were promulgated without clear authority under federal law or compliance with existing provisions. The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act only explicitly allows for residency verification for discounted parks passes on the basis of age, disability, and military service.⁹ *All* new or changed recreation fees are subject to clear advance notice and public participation requirements, notices in local newspapers regarding new or changed fees and public involvement in the development of those fees. As our colleagues in the Senate noted in December, there is no indication that those notices have been posted or that public engagement has taken place.¹⁰ The new rules also risk being struck down in court, producing even greater uncertainty for park employees, park visitors, and the outdoor recreation economy.

By continuing to implement these rules under those circumstances, NPS is unnecessarily hurting both its own workforce and the communities that rely on our national parks. We therefore ask that NPS halt the implementation of the new fee rules for national parks and engage with Congress on a robust solution to fund our National Park System. We thank you for your attention to this issue and request an update on NPS' plans for these rules no later than February 15, 2026.

Sincerely,

⁵ [Executive Order \(EO\) 14314 | Federal Register](#)

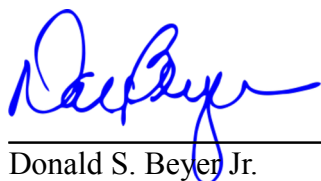
⁶ [Deep cuts made 2025 a difficult year for National Park Service | Roll Call](#)

⁷ [Trump's hiring freeze creates 'scary time' at National Park Service | Politico](#)

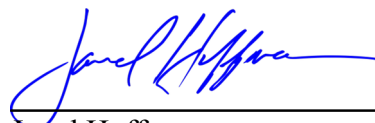
⁸ [How Trump's plan to charge foreigners more is causing chaos at national parks | Washington Post](#)

⁹ [16 USC Ch. 87 §6802\(e\) | U.S. Code](#)

¹⁰ [Letter to Secretary Burgum | Sen. Padilla](#)



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



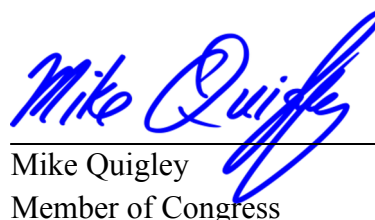
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



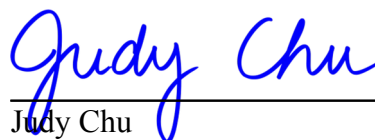
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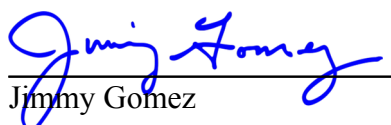
Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



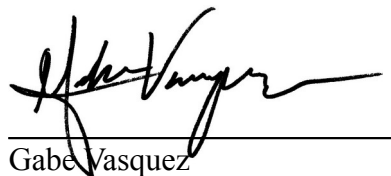
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



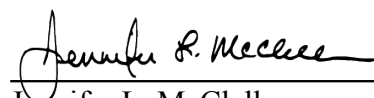
Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez
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Susie Lee
Member of Congress



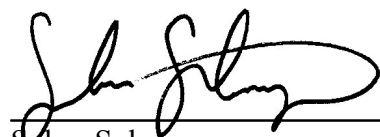
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