

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 18, 2016

The Honorable Jon Jarvis
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Jarvis:

Our national parks, monuments, lands and waters belong to all Americans. Every person – regardless of who they are or where they live – should be able to experience and enjoy the natural, cultural and historic wonders of our public lands. Under your leadership, the National Park Service (NPS) has taken important steps to ensure our national park system better reflects our country’s growing diversity, however more work remains to be done. As we prepare to celebrate the centennial of the NPS this year, we have a unique opportunity to build a national park system that better reflects the diversity of America’s history, people, and cultures.

Historically, the NPS and the environmental community have been perceived as exclusionary and the domain of primarily wealthy white Americans. Efforts by the NPS to connect with a more ethnically diverse America have not gone unnoticed. We celebrate the progress the NPS has attained in breaking through the so-called “Green Ceiling” of 12% to 16% minority employment, reaching approximately 20% in 2015. That said, we note that communities of color make up approximately 36% of the U.S. population and are projected to be the majority of the nation’s population by 2043. The NPS must continue to build a workforce that fully represents the diversity of America.

We are greatly concerned by low attendance from African Americans and other communities of color. Despite the fact that national park visitation set a new record in 2015, only one in five visitors is a person of color. And while Latinos are the fastest-growing group in the United States, only 1 in 10 National Park visitors is Latino. Recent studies have revealed that non-visiting communities of color do not visit NPS parks or monuments because of the lack of information of NPS units, and because of perceptions that NPS units were unsafe, unpleasant, or provided poor service. It is clear that meaningful and targeted outreach is required.

While the beauty of the preserved natural settings within NPS units is attractive to all Americans, the historical setting can be off-putting to people who do not feel that their history is being celebrated or adequately represented. According to a recent Center for American Progress analysis, of the more than 400 national parks and monuments in the NPS system, only about one-quarter have a primary focus on women, communities of color, or other traditionally underrepresented groups. Even though the NPS has made strides in improving its efforts to provide a more accurate and inclusive view of American history – including the role of African Americans in the Civil War and new studies of the roles of American Indians and Latinos in our history – much more work remains to be done, especially in the area of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Three aspects of diversity within the NPS are interrelated. As more communities of color are employed in the parks, the parks will become more attractive to ethnically diverse visitors. And as more underrepresented communities look for content to which they can relate, attendance and employment should increase. Therefore, we ask you, as Director of the NPS, to provide information on the following:

1. What measures have you put in place to attract more ethnically diverse employment applicants to the NPS?
2. What outreach programs have you instituted directed at communities of color to increase attendance at existing NPS units?
3. What additional NPS units or revision to presentations at existing NPS units are planned in order to appeal to underrepresented communities?

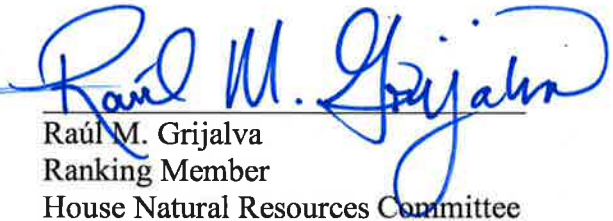
Just about anyone can appreciate and benefit from our National Parks, but not everyone has an equal opportunity to experience our greatest treasures. If we want to see our public parks thrive for the next 100 years, they need to be accessible to all Americans. We look forward to working with the NPS to make our system of national parks and monuments more inclusive and reflective of the diversity of American history and experience.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our request. We look forward to your response.

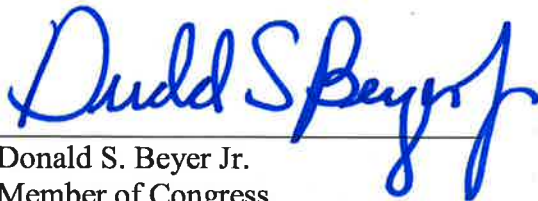
Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

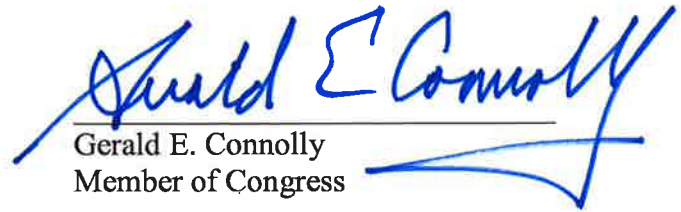


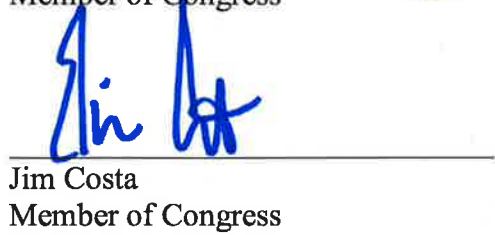
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Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
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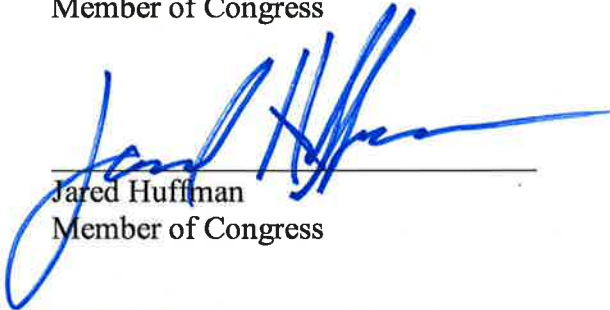

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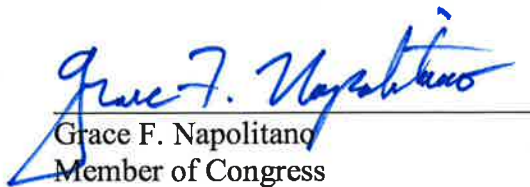

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Member of Congress

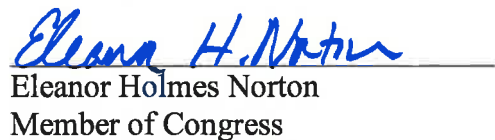

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