

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

October 29, 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you consider President Trump's supplemental funding request, I write to express serious concerns about his \$500 million request for National Park Service (NPS) construction. As proposed, this taxpayer funding could pay for the President's proposed transformation of the accessible, multi-use, and historic East Potomac Park into a single elite championship golf course, while leaving open the possibility that his administration could sell the property to Trump himself. Without clear guardrails, taxpayers could end up footing the bill for seawall repairs that ultimately help pad Trump's golf course portfolio. I support repairing the park's run-down seawall as needed to support the continued safe use for a variety of recreational activities by the public, just as I would support any vetted deferred maintenance project.

President Trump has gone to extremes to turn East Potomac Park into an elite and exclusive golf course.¹ On June 24, 2026, he asked Congress to provide a half billion dollars for "targeted restoration and construction for the Seawall and the World War II Memorial."² His administration has lined up federal contracts worth up to \$50 million for redeveloping the golf course and additional forecasted contracts for East Potomac Park grounds and building maintenance total up to \$11.7 million.³ The President's own fundraiser, Meredith O'Rourke, appears to have solicited foreign donations for a nonprofit created to push this golf course.⁴ Over Indigenous Peoples' Day Weekend, NPS cut down

¹ Letter from Hon. Jared Huffman, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Nat. Res., et al., to Hon. Doug Burgum, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of the Interior, and Hon. Jessica Bowron, Acting Director, Nat'l Park Serv. (Sep. 16, 2026).

² Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget. Supplemental Funding Request. June 24, 2026.
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2026.06.24-Letter-to-the-Honorable-Mike-Johnson.pdf>

³ See Acquisition Gateway, 2027 Forecasted Contracts, (accessed Oct. 22, 2026)
<https://acquisitiongateway.gov/forecast/resources/50491?nid=50491>;
<https://acquisitiongateway.gov/forecast/resources/50471?nid=50471>;
<https://acquisitiongateway.gov/forecast/resources/50511?nid=50511>

⁴ See Democratic Staff of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, *From Vanity to Insanity: How the White House Cheated the American People Out of Their 250th Birthday* (July 2, 2026), https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/freedom250_oversight_report1.pdf.

roughly 400 trees at East Potomac Park, by its own account, with plans to cut 529 in total, infuriating the judge who ordered them not to proceed.⁵

East Potomac Park is sinking into the Potomac. Its seawalls date to the late 1800s and early 1900s, and they are failing. The Committee has received information indicating that the redevelopment plan posted on social media by Secretary Burgum in May 2026⁶ is likely not viable without an overhaul of the seawall. In other words, President Trump’s desired golf course overhaul requires the seawall to be repaired. If Congress appropriated the funds, it would push the unauthorized golf course project ahead of the long line of NPS’ backlogged maintenance projects across the country.

The rush to complete the repairs on the taxpayer dime is concerning in light of the Committee’s review of a provision of federal law that gives the Department of the Interior Secretary a potential tool to transfer ownership of East Potomac Park to the President or his allies. Under 40 U.S.C. § 8735, Secretary Doug Burgum could exploit a loophole that allows the Secretary to sell NPS land in the District of Columbia that is “no longer needed for public purposes,” and hand-pick buyers through a private solicitation.⁷

Although this would require the approval of the National Capital Planning Commission, that is no safeguard.⁸ This is the same commission that rubber-stamped Donald Trump’s billion-dollar ballroom⁹ and has preliminarily blessed the 250-foot arch.¹⁰ Its newest chair, Mark Paoletta, is the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) general counsel.¹¹ He works for Director Russell Vought, who sent the \$500 million supplemental funding request. The vice chairman is an associate director at OMB, and one of its commissioners—James Blair—was President Trump’s deputy chief of staff,¹² before taking a leave of absence to return to Trump’s campaign organization. Secretary Burgum sits on the commission as an *ex officio* member.

Any taxpayer-funded redevelopment of East Potomac Park should prevent the National Capital Planning Commission from finding that East Potomac Park is no longer needed for public purposes and could thus be sold under 40 U.S.C. § 8735. The park’s civil rights history¹³ as well as its daily use for fishing, picnicking, biking, running, golf, sightseeing, and more make the ongoing public purpose obvious. The 1897 statute in which Congress “made and declared [East Potomac Park] a public park” to be “forever held and used as a park for the recreation and pleasure of the people”¹⁴

⁵ *Trump says he’ll appeal decision halting ballroom construction to the Supreme Court*, NBC NEWS (Aug. 7, 2026), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/appeals-court-blocks-trump-ballroom-construction-rcna591376>; *Another court blocks White House ballroom work, teeing up a Supreme Court review*, NPR (Aug. 7, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/08/07/nx-s1-5925123/white-house-ballroom-appeals-court-congress>.

⁶ Doug Burgum (@SecretaryBurgum), X (May 14, 2026, 10:40 AM), <https://x.com/SecretaryBurgum/status/2054934836771488181>.

⁷ 40 U.S.C. § 8735

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Luke Broadwater, *Planning Commission Approves Trump’s Ballroom, but Legal Roadblocks Remain*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 2, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/02/us/politics/trump-ballroom-commission-vote.html>.

¹⁰ Rachel Treisman, *Trump’s arch clears another hurdle, setting up a big debate: Do height limits apply?*, NPR (July 9, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/07/09/nx-s1-5884728/trump-arch-height-act-commission-meeting>.

¹¹ Press Release, Nat’l Capital Planning Comm’n, President Trump Appoints Mark Paoletta National Capital Planning Commission Chairman (Aug. 3, 2026), <https://www.ncpc.gov/news/item/266/1>.

¹² See NAT’L CAPITAL PLANNING COMM’N, *About the Commission*, <https://www.ncpc.gov/about/commission> (last visited Oct. 9, 2026).

¹³ Petula Dvorak, *The Real History of East Potomac Park*, CITY CAST DC (Sept. 2, 2026), <https://dc.citycast.fm/history-archive/east-potomac-park-history>.

¹⁴ Act of Mar. 3, 1897, ch. 375, 29 Stat. 624.

should also foreclose such a finding. But given this administration's record, Secretary Burgum could still try to use § 8735 to sell the land, or to shift its control to Trump or his friends or family.

I support the work necessary to preserve this historic and vital public land. However, it would be unconscionable to let President Trump direct taxpayers to pay for the most expensive portion of the park's maintenance needs and then take it from them to create a golf course catering to him and his billionaire buddies. Congress must ensure it does not happen.

The American people paid to create this park, appropriating \$400,000 in 1882 to reclaim the land from the Potomac River,¹⁵ and then dedicated it to the people by law in 1897. Congress should now use the power of the purse to close the door on a land sale before Trump demonstrates, yet again, his penchant for putting his selfish desires before working families' needs and above the law.

If the President's desire to restore the seawall is a good faith effort to rehabilitate our public lands, as is the desire of Congress, then he should have no objection to commonsense guardrails on his supplemental funding request. His objection would be telling. These guardrails would ensure that funding allocated for the seawall cannot be transferred to any other building projects and that East Potomac Park remains "forever held and used as a park for the recreation and pleasure of the people,"¹⁶ as Congress directed in 1897, and does not become an exclusive golf course for the President and his rich allies.

I respectfully request that you include the following language in any bill that funds construction at East Potomac Park, any part of the park, or its seawall:

SEC. ____ . (a) In General.—During the period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act, none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this or any other Act, including amounts available without further appropriation and any gift, donation, or in-kind contribution, may be used—

(1) to sell, exchange, donate, or otherwise convey any part of East Potomac Park, to grant any option to purchase or right of first refusal in any part of East Potomac Park, or to transfer administrative jurisdiction over any part of East Potomac Park from the Secretary of the Interior;

(2) to redesign, reconstruct, or expand the golf courses in East Potomac Park, to carry out a covered alteration, or to plan, design, procure, or award a contract for such an activity;

(3) to enter into, approve, consent to, or recognize with respect to any lease, sublease, concession, contract, license, management agreement, or other agreement for the use, occupancy, operation, or management of any part of East Potomac Park—

¹⁵ HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY, *Girl Scout Teahouse (Hains Point Teahouse)* (Oct. 20, 1987), <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/master/pnp/habshaer/dc/dc0500/dc0598/data/dc0598data.pdf>.

¹⁶ Act of Mar. 3, 1897, ch. 375, 29 Stat. 624.

- (A) any such agreement with a covered person;*
- (B) any assignment or other transfer of an interest in any such agreement to a covered person; or*
- (C) any change in control of a party to any such agreement that would result in the party being owned or controlled by a covered person.*

(b) Exception.—Subsection (a)(2) does not apply to routine maintenance and repair, or to repair or replacement of the seawall along its existing alignment, unless the work is designed, sized, phased, or sequenced to accommodate an activity described in that paragraph.

(c) Definition.—In this section:

(1) Covered alteration. The term “covered alteration” means any of the following activities in East Potomac Park:

- (A) Realignment, widening, narrowing, closing to the public, or removing any existing road, path, or trail, or constructing any new road, path, trail, or parking area.*
- (B) Constructing any new building, or expanding, demolishing, or removing any existing building.*
- (C) Moving, reshaping, enlarging, or eliminating any green, tee, fairway, bunker, water feature, or other golf course feature, or changing the number of holes or the routing of any golf course.*
- (D) Removing any healthy tree, other than a tree that poses an immediate hazard to public safety or property or a tree the removal of which is necessary to maintain play on the layout of the golf courses as it existed on September 1, 2026.*
- (E) Excavating, filling, or regrading land in a manner that changes the existing contours or drainage of any area except to address drainage problems incurred during the October 2026 removal of over 500 trees.*
- (F) Installing any fence, gate, or other barrier that restricts public access to any area open to the public on the date of enactment of this Act.*

(2) Covered person. The term “covered person” means—

- (A) The President;*

- (B) the spouse of the President, any child or stepchild of the President, and the spouse of any such child or stepchild;*
- (C) any trust in which the President or an individual described in subparagraph (B) holds a beneficial interest or serves as trustee; and*
- (D) any corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or other entity that is owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by a person described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C), or in which such a person holds an ownership interest or serves as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or managing member.*

(3) East Potomac Park. The term "East Potomac Park" means the land in the District of Columbia administered by the National Park Service as East Potomac Park, including Hains Point, Ohio Drive SW, the East Potomac Golf Links, the East Potomac Tennis Center, and the seawall surrounding the peninsula.

(4) Routine maintenance and repair. The term "routine maintenance and repair" means—

(A) means work to keep or return existing facilities, grounds, and landscapes in East Potomac Park to their condition, location, footprint, and configuration as of September 1, 2026, including mowing, turf care, irrigation repair, resurfacing existing roads and paths in kind, repair of existing buildings, and removal of dead or diseased trees; and

(B) Does not include a covered alteration.

Thank you for your attention to this request. I look forward to working with you to protect East Potomac Park for the American people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jared Huffman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources