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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150
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May 23, 2025

Hon. Doug Burgum
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

Earlier this month, the Trump administration released its preliminary 2026 budget request outlining significant cuts to government agencies, including steep cuts to the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS). The administration's budget proposes a \$900 million reduction to the operation of the National Park System – approximately a 30 percent cut.¹

In the same budget submission, the administration proposed “transferring smaller, lesser visited parks to [s]tate and tribal governments.”² The administration's proposal to reduce NPS' budget and transfer management responsibilities of park system units to states threatens local economies and businesses. In fact, national parks are engines of economic growth. In 2023, visitors to NPS sites contributed an estimated \$55.6 billion to the economy and supported over 400,000 jobs.³

As you know, most NPS units were established legislatively, and transferring them out of federal management would require legislation from Congress. As the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, which has jurisdiction over legislation regarding the National Park System, I am opposed to the administration's proposal to transfer NPS sites to the states. States do not have the same resources as the Federal government to manage and maintain these sites that tell the complex story of our nation. The budget proposal makes clear that the administration expects the states to shoulder the burden of managing these sites without any additional funding or resources, many of which have significant and costly deferred maintenance backlogs.

You appeared before the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, earlier this week to outline the administration's budget submission.⁴ At that

¹ “The President's Fiscal Year 2026 Discretionary Budget Request,” Executive Office of the President – Office of Management and Budget, May 2, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Fiscal-Year-2026-Discretionary-Budget-Request.pdf>.

² Id.

³ “National Parks Contributed Record High \$55.6 Billion to U.S. Economy, Supported 415,000 Jobs in 2023,” National Park Service – US Department of the Interior. August 27, 2024. [https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/national-parks-contributed-record-high-\\$55-6-billion-to-u-s-economy-supported-415-000-jobs-in-2023.htm](https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/national-parks-contributed-record-high-$55-6-billion-to-u-s-economy-supported-415-000-jobs-in-2023.htm)

⁴ “A Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior,” United States Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, May 21, 2025.


hearing, I asked you about the administration's plan to transfer hundreds of NPS units to the states. You told me that you have not yet consulted with the states that you hope to transfer these units to, nor have you determined which units are under consideration. Earlier in the week, you told the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, that there are "over 400 other locations that the national park service manages" that are under consideration for divestment, but you did not provide any detail about which units those are, other than that they are not the "crown jewels."⁵

In light of these outstanding questions and concerns, I request you provide comprehensive responses to the following questions by June 6, 2025:

1. At the hearing in the House Appropriations Committee, you said the administration is not considering transferring any of the "crown jewel" national parks. Please list which NPS units the administration is not considering transferring to states and which units the administration is considering transferring to states. For each unit the administration is considering transferring to states, please describe why the administration is considering the transfer.
2. What factors will the administration consider when generating its list of which NPS units to transfer and which units not to transfer? In responding to this question, please provide a comprehensive list of all factors the Department will consider.
3. For each NPS unit the Department is considering transferring to a state, has the Department conducted or does the Department plan to conduct a comprehensive analysis to understand the economic impact to local gateway communities? If so, please provide a copy of the analysis.
4. For each NPS unit the Department is considering transferring to a state, has the Department conducted or does the Department plan to conduct a comprehensive analysis to understand if the state is equipped (*e.g.*, possesses sufficient resources and funding) to manage the site? If so, please provide a copy of the analysis.

Thank you, in advance, for your prompt responses to these questions. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact my staff at (202) 224-4971.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member

<https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/a-review-of-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2026-budget-request-for-the-department-of-the-interior>.

⁵ "Budget Hearing – Department of the Interior," House Committee on Appropriations, May 20, 2025.
<https://appropriations.house.gov/schedule/hearings/budget-hearing-department-interior>.