

JOE MANCHIN III, West Virginia, *Chairman*

RON WYDEN, Oregon
MARIA CANTWELL, Washington
BERNARD SANDERS, Vermont
MARTIN HEINRICH, New Mexico
MAZIE HIRONO, Hawaii
ANGUS S. KING, JR., Maine
CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO, Nevada
MARK KELLY, Arizona
JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, Colorado

JOHN BARRASSO, Wyoming
JAMES E. RISCH, Idaho
MIKE LEE, Utah
STEVE DAINES, Montana
LISA MURKOWSKI, Alaska
JOHN HOEVEN, North Dakota
JAMES LANKFORD, Oklahoma
BILL CASSIDY, Louisiana
CINDY HYDE-SMITH, Mississippi
ROGER MARSHALL, Kansas

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150

WWW.ENERGY.SENATE.GOV

RENAE BLACK, STAFF DIRECTOR
SAM E. FOWLER, CHIEF COUNSEL
RICHARD M. RUSSELL, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR
MATTHEW H. LEGGETT, REPUBLICAN CHIEF COUNSEL

September 28, 2021

The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

The safety, security, and public access to America's national parks should be a priority regardless of the political environment. As we approach the end of the fiscal year there is a possibility of a lapse in appropriations, and I write to urge you to use your existing authorities to keep the national parks and other public lands open and accessible to the public in the event of a government shutdown.

Closing the parks would have devastating impacts, including impacts to: (1) members of the public who plan and save for trips to national parks; (2) gateway communities that rely on park visitation for jobs and economic stability and; (3) National Park Service (NPS) employees who rely on a regular paycheck.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) authorizes you to retain funds from the collection of fees and to use those funds for various purposes, including visitor access and services, public health and safety, and law enforcement related to public use and recreation. In previous years, it has been demonstrated that these funds can be successfully utilized to keep public lands open during a shutdown.

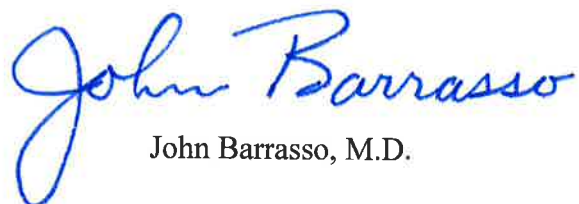
Many national parks and other facilities under your jurisdiction charge entrance fees, and some charge additional, separate fees for certain recreational uses. The majority of the funds generated from these "rec fees" are retained and used at the parks where they were collected. The remaining funds are distributed to parks that don't collect fees, and must be used for purposes specified in FLREA. During the December 2018-January 2019 government shutdown, most of the national parks remained accessible to visitors because rec fees were available to cover costs associated with visitor services and law enforcement.

The NPS Organic Act established a dual mission, requiring the service *to conserve the scenery and to provide for the enjoyment* of the people. Both of these objectives can be accomplished through careful planning and coordination. To ensure that you are protecting public access to our public places and preventing any irreversible environmental degradation during a shutdown, I ask that you keep the parks and public lands open and accessible. Additionally, please provide

me with a current accounting of the FLREA funds available, as well as the contingency plans for each of the bureaus at Interior.

Thank you for your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Barrasso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Barrasso, M.D.