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United States Senate

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February 6, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I write to you regarding my concerns about the Department of the Interior's (Department) recruiting and retention efforts for its law enforcement components, most notably within the United States Park Police (USPP). The USPP's attrition rate, its outdated pay scale and ongoing staffing shortages are alarming. In order to restore public trust in the Department's essential law enforcement functions and enhance morale, retention, and recruitment within the Department's law enforcement components, concrete steps need to be taken to address these issues.

Recently, the Chairman of the United States Park Police Fraternal Order of Police, Kenneth Spencer, stated that, "According to the National Park Service, the U.S. Park Police should have a minimum of 432 sworn officers assigned to the Washington Metropolitan Area (DC, VA, MD), but as of this month, we only have 370."¹ He also said that, "We have an average annual attrition rate of 35 officers." According to the Congressional Research Service, the total number of sworn law enforcement officers as of December 2023 is only 20 more than December of 2022.² Even if this increase was dispersed across all seven of the Department's law enforcement components, this would do little to address ongoing and chronic staffing shortages. The Department is clearly failing to make necessary recruitment changes and mitigate staffing shortages.

These issues highlight the limited amount of attention the Department of the Interior pays to ensuring its law enforcement programs are fully resourced. Recruitment and retention numbers continue to decline year over year.³ The Department needs to start developing comprehensive plans to promptly address this problem.

I ask that you respond to the following questions no later than February 22, 2024.

Sincerely,


John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member

¹ [USPPFOP Release on Lincoln Memorial Vandalism.pdf](#)

² [Department of the Interior Law Enforcement Programs \(crs.gov\)](#)

³ [DOI DEIA Strategic Plan - Final \(2022-03-23\)](#)

Questions

1. Why has the rate of recruitment and retention for USPP officers decreased in the last few years?
2. What steps is the Department of the Interior taking to increase recruitment and retention of its law enforcement officers?
3. Have efforts, such as those guided by President Biden's Executive Order 14074,⁴ been measurably successful?
 - a. If so, how? Please provide all relevant statistics showing recruitment and retention numbers both before and after the issuance of the Executive Order.
 - b. Has the Department excluded from consideration any otherwise qualified USPP candidates who are not "representative of communities they are sworn to serve" pursuant to Executive Order 14074?
4. In order to improve recruitment and retention of USPP officers and improve public safety, would you support congressional efforts to restructure Park Police pay scales to match the majority of federal law enforcement agencies?

⁴ Federal Register :: Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices To Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety