

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write to inquire about the Trump administration's allocation of fee revenues paid by Americans for national park recreation passes and America the Beautiful digital passes to support beautification projects in Washington D.C. Visitors to our national parks contribute millions of dollars to the National Park Service's (NPS) budget by purchasing recreation passes and digital versions of the America the Beautiful Pass. The American people deserve transparency and a complete explanation of where their money is being directed.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) grants public land management agencies the ability to collect and charge fees for accessing federal recreational lands.¹ FLREA requires that, under normal circumstances, at least 80 percent of the recreation fees paid onsite by taxpayers must be retained and used at the national park where the fees are collected. The remaining 20 percent is to be available to the agency that collected it on an agency-wide basis. This enables the National Park Service to redistribute revenues from popular parks that charge entrance fees to those parks that do not charge fees. This formula helps ensure that fees benefit visitors by creating a funding stream for the upkeep and maintenance of our national parks.

Rather than distribute these fee revenues back to our national parks and public lands, it appears that the Department of the Interior has redirected fee revenues to pay for President Trump's vanity projects around Washington, D.C. Reporting reveals that NPS is spending \$60 million in fees paid by national park visitors to repair nine ornamental fountains in Washington, D.C.^{2 3} This is in addition to another \$7 million in fees that the administration is using to fund the renovation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, which DOI recently increased to more than \$13 million in a no bid contract. President Trump previously promised the Reflecting Pool project would only cost \$1.8 million, and the huge spending increases suggests either incompetence or corruption in the project management.⁴ The Washington Post has reported that park fee revenues would no longer be available for some park superintendents to use on park upkeep.⁵

¹ 16 U.S.C. 6801-6814

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/27/climate/park-service-fees-washington-trump.html>

³ https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_140P2026F0027_1443_140FGA23D0141_1448

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/11/us/politics/reflecting-pool-paint-contract-trump.html>

A separate analysis of government spending data conducted by NOTUS revealed that the Interior Department is spending a total of \$95 million in taxpayer dollars on D.C. beautification projects close to the White House.⁶ The President's D.C. projects include a \$5 million sole-source award to cover horse statues in nearly pure gold leaf and another \$5 million sole-source award to repave the base of a marble statue.⁷ ⁸ According to USASpending.gov, these particular awards are being drawn from DOI's Working Capital Fund.

Further, revenue from the sale of digital America the Beautiful Passes appears to be funding some of these projects, but without any guardrails or transparency. Most Americans would assume that the fees paid for the digital passes would be similarly distributed to parks throughout the country. However, unlike fees collected onsite, FLREA does not mandate a particular formula or means of distribution of revenues collected from digital sales to particular national parks or federal land units. Revenue from online sales is distributed according to agreements between the federal land agencies and with little statutory guardrails or congressional oversight.

Credible sources with direct knowledge of these matters have now reported to Congress that much, if not all, fee revenue from online America the Beautiful Passes is being used to fund the President's "beautification" projects in Washington. This means that this revenue is not being directed to national parks across the country. This loss in revenue for our parks could have devastating effects on the future viability of these public natural treasures. As of the end of Fiscal Year 2025, NPS had a backlog of deferred maintenance projects totaling over \$24.2 billion.⁹ Deteriorating roads, water systems, and other park facilities pose safety concerns for visitors and over time degrade the overall park experience. The redistribution of revenues to D.C. projects could mean multiple millions of dollars lost for individual national parks around the country.

Despite taxpayers' clear contributions to these projects, the administration has shielded these projects and the contracts from public view. For instance, President Trump awarded a \$17.4 million no-bid contract for the repair of two Lafayette Park fountains in Washington, D.C., to the company currently building the White House ballroom.¹⁰ It is troubling that the administration has used sole-source contracts to bypass the fair and impartial open competition process that is typically required under federal law.

Consequently, we ask that you provide responses to the following requests by June 23, 2026:

1. Is any revenue from online sales of America the Beautiful passes being used to fund D.C. beautification projects? If so, what percentage of revenues from online sales are being used for these projects?
2. What percentage of NPS's centralized FLREA fund for land management revenue funds is being supplied by online sales of electronic passes? What percentage of funding for the

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2026/06/03/trump-officials-divert-national-park-service-fees-fund-july-4-celebration/>

⁶ <https://www.notus.org/trump-white-house/national-park-service-dc-beautification-contracts-horse-statues>

⁷ https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_140D0426C0078_1406_-NONE_-NONE-

⁸ https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_140D0426C0039_1406_-NONE_-NONE-

⁹ <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/infrastructure/deferred-maintenance.htm>

¹⁰ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/25/us/politics/lafayette-park-fountains-trump-contract.html>

central pool is being supplied by for online sales of America the Beautiful passes versus on-site physical sales of these passes?

3. For sales of the interagency national park and federal recreation land passes (America the Beautiful pass), FLREA allows for the revenues to be distributed according to interagency agreement.¹¹ Please provide any interagency agreements, memoranda of understanding, or other documentation outlining exactly how revenues from online sales of passes are being distributed.
 - a. When were these interagency agreements last updated? And if after January 20, 2025, please provide the previous agreements.
4. To what extent are digital sales of passes displacing sales at specific park sites and displacing the revenue generated and retained at park sites for on-site sales? Please provide relevant data.
5. How much of NPS's recreation fee account has been used for D.C.-based projects since December 2025?
 - a. How much since January 2025?
6. Why did NPS repeatedly offer sole-source contracts without a competition process that is typically required under federal law?
 - a. If it is the case that the administration wanted this work done before July 4, why did the administration not offer the contract opportunity sooner?
7. Why did NPS reportedly direct contract recipients not to speak to the media? Has NPS issued a similar directive to recipients regarding communication with Congress?
8. Has NPS calculated how much funding national park units outside of D.C. will lose or which backlogged projects will not be completed as a result of this redistribution of funds? Please provide this information.
9. Please provide all contracts awarded by DOI for projects in Washington, D.C., since December 1, 2025.

The lack of transparency around awards for these beautification projects, as well as the loss in revenue meant for the maintenance and betterment of our national parks threatens the public's trust and the long-term integrity of our nation's most beloved public lands. Accordingly, as we investigate the potential waste, fraud, and abuse by the administration, we request a detailed explanation for where the revenue from digital passes is being directed and what percentage of this revenue is supporting the D.C. projects rather than supporting the maintenance of our public parks. Thank you for your response.

Sincerely,

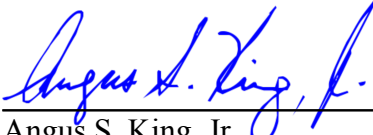


Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

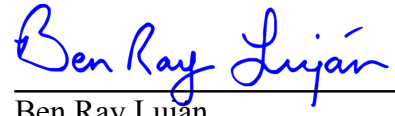


Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

¹¹ 16 U.S.C. 6804



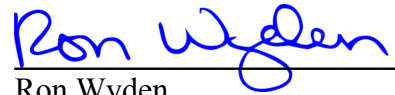
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



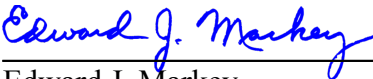
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



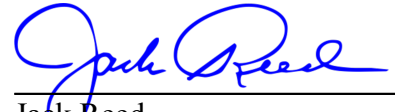
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
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