

# United States Senate

December 23, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Burgum,

We write to express our concern about the new \$250 America the Beautiful Non-Resident Annual Passes and the additional \$100 non-resident fee for 11 highly visited parks. America's national parks serve as destinations for visitors both domestically and internationally to experience our country's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and history. While we understand that entrance and recreation fees are vital to enhancing the visitor experience, we want to ensure all feel welcome to enjoy all national treasures. Since these new fees are scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2026, we strongly believe these fees are being implemented too quickly, without public input, and will be a barrier for both residents and non-residents alike.

The *Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act* allows most of the federal land management agencies, including the National Park Service (NPS), to collect and retain entrance and recreation fees. The law states the "Secretary shall provide the public with opportunities to participate in the development of or changing of a recreation fee." It also requires advanced notice to impacted communities, specifically requiring the Secretary to "publish notice of a new recreation fee or a change to an existing recreation fee established under this chapter in local newspapers and publications located near the site at which the recreation fee would be established or changed." To our knowledge, there was no opportunity for the public to participate in the development of these new fees.

We are also concerned about the impact this plan would have on the already understaffed NPS workforce. The NPS permanent workforce has been reduced by 24% since January, with lost positions that would be important in helping implement these new fees, including fee collectors and IT specialists. Further, the additional requirements to check each visitors' residency will very likely slow entry into the parks, particularly the highly visited parks identified to charge \$100 per person in addition to regular entry fees.

Finally, we are concerned about what these fees will mean for international visitation. According to the International Inbound Travel Association, overseas visitation is down more than 3% and Canadian visitation is down 25%. International visitors spent \$254 billion in the United States in 2024 and national parks are often part of their itinerary.

Therefore, we request that you stop implementation of the new non-resident passes and fees until the public has an opportunity to weigh in, impacts to visitation are studied, and clarity on implementation is provided to Congress, NPS employees, and impacted stakeholders.

We also request answers to the following questions:

- The *Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act* requires public participation in the development of new national park fees. Can you explain why the public was not involved?

- Did the Department publish notice of the new recreation fees in local newspapers or publications located near the 11 highly visited parks, as is required by the *Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act*? If no, why not?
- How does the Department plan to implement the new fees, particularly the additional \$100 in 11 highly visited parks, with severely reduced permanent staff levels? What guidance has been provided to NPS staff required to collect these fees? Please provide any guidance or training materials associated with this fee change.
- How is NPS defining the terms “resident,” “residency,” and “non-resident”? How do individuals prove citizenship or residency when purchasing a pass online, and will any personal information be stored in any way for the Department or any other agencies to access?
- How do individuals prove residency when purchasing a pass in-person, and which documents will be accepted? Will any personal information be stored through this process?
- What is the process for checking a carload of visitors to a national park for their residency? Will the driver be the only one required to show proof of residency, or will every visitor be required to provide identification?
- What if an individual fails to bring an acceptable form of identification?
- Several popular national park sites already have issues with long entrance lines. What measures are being put in place by the Department to ensure the process is seamless and efficient for both residents and non-residents?
- What analyses were conducted by the Department to understand the impacts to visitation at our parks, as well as the economic impacts to gateway communities and the recreation industry, by implementing these new fees?

Thank you in advance for addressing these important questions and stopping the implementation of these new fees until we get clarity on these issues.

Sincerely,



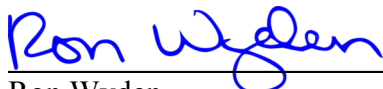
Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



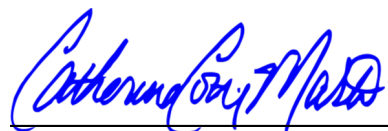
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