

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 8, 2020

Ms. Margaret Everson
Counselor to the Secretary Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Director National Park Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Ms. Everson:

We are deeply disturbed that the President continues to use our nation's park system—sites that include some of our country's most iconic symbols of freedom—to advance his partisan political agenda. Most recently, the Republican National Convention hosted several political campaign events on federal property that raised significant ethical concerns, may have been in contravention of the Hatch Act, and used federal resources inappropriately or possibly even illegally. This includes President Trump's campaign speech at the White House, Vice President Pence's campaign speech at Fort McHenry, and the fireworks display at the Washington Monument—which we note spelled out “T-R-U-M-P” in the sky above our nation's capital. These activities are both outrageous and legally suspect.

As Chair and Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittees on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies of the House and Senate, we are examining the extent to which these events used taxpayer-funded historic and cultural resources to support the President's re-election and if these activities were conducted consistent with Federal law, Federal regulations, and Department guidelines or policies.

We also note that, according to Director's Order #53: Special Park Uses, “The Hatch Act establishes general provisions governing participation in political activities by executive branch employees” (5 CFR 734.101). We understand that the Hatch Act does not apply to the President and Vice President, but National Park Service (NPS) staff were clearly involved in the planning and execution of this event which calls into question their ability to comply with the Act. Although we are deeply troubled by these events, we understand the reality that NPS staff were acting under the direction of the chief of the executive branch, President Trump. However, while NPS staff must follow their chain of command, the agency must also provide Congress with the information necessary to fulfill its Constitutional duty to conduct oversight of the executive branch.

To this end, we request that you provide the following information by September 30, 2020:

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- A full accounting of the amount of NPS staff time and resources spent supporting the Republican National Convention, including planning and preparation, during the event itself and afterwards;
- A description of specific actions taken by the Department to ensure that the participation of Department staff, including both political appointees and career officials, fully complied with relevant statutory or policy restrictions on political activity;
- All information submitted for the permits, including cost estimates; compliance with 36 CFR 2.51, specifically (c)(2), or the justification for any deviation; and an assessment of how the issuance of these permits disrupted normal public use (amount of time the American public was prohibited access);
- A list of permits issued for political activities at NPS sites, including those of similar size and scope;
- The criteria and legal justification for providing a permit to use the White House, the Washington Monument, and Fort McHenry for partisan political or campaign activities, including details on the specific type of permit approved and how that approval complies with Federal law, Federal regulations, Department policies and procedures, and past precedent;
- The name of the entity or entities assigned responsibility for any cost reimbursements and the timeline for reimbursement;
- A description of the nature of the reported damage to the Fort McHenry site and the cost associated with the repairs, as well as which entity was assigned legal responsibility for paying for the repairs and the timeline for such payment.

We look forward to receiving your responses.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives



Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior
Environment, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate