



palm desert area
chamber of commerce



DATE **March 10, 2017**

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Interior Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chair
House Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Minority Member
Interior Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Minority Member
House Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murkowski, Chairman Calvert, and Ranking Members Udall and McCollum:

2016 marked the 100th birthday of the National Park Service (NPS), which oversees more than 400 natural and cultural areas in all 50 states and most U.S. territories. NPS faces a growing challenge in adequately maintaining its sites to ensure that visitors can experience the parks' natural beauty and learn about our nation's history. After decades of underfunding, NPS has an infrastructure repair backlog estimated at \$11.9 billion (FY 2015). This includes crucial repairs to aging historical structures and thousands of miles of roads and trails, bridges, tunnels, sewers, drainage, and other vital infrastructure.

Writer and historian Wallace Stegner said that national parks are "the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." As companies, organizations, and associations, we support addressing the infrastructure repair backlog throughout these parks.

To address the backlog and put our national parks on sound financial footing for the future, we must do the following:

- Create a guaranteed federal fund that will chip away at the estimated \$11.9 billion backlog over time.
- Implement policy reforms, such as entry and vendor fees, that will help to prevent repair backlog from accruing to begin with.

- Direct more Highway Trust Fund dollars to NPS, as half of the estimated \$11.9 billion backlog is attributed to the 10,000 miles of roads and hundreds of bridges and tunnels that NPS must maintain and repair.
- Provide additional opportunities for public-private opportunities to address infrastructure repair.

From the Grand Canyon and the Great Smoky Mountains, to the Statue of Liberty to battlefields like Gettysburg, the National Park System serves as a living testament to our citizens' valor, our hardships, our victories, and our traditions as Americans. We need to ensure that our children and grandchildren are able to see and appreciate our rich history in these places, and to learn more about the people and lands that have shaped us as a nation.

We urge you to work with us to protect our national parks well into the future and, in particular, to support guaranteed funding for infrastructure repair needs.

Sincerely,



Laurie Baldwin, IOM
President/CEO
Palm Desert Area Chamber of Commerce