

United States Senate

November 13, 2017

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

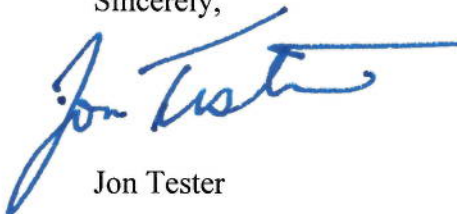
I was surprised and disappointed to hear about the recent proposal by the National Park Service to more than double the entrance fees charged during peak seasons at 17 national parks-- including Glacier and Yellowstone. More expensive fees will make it more difficult for Montanans to access some of our nation's best public lands.

Americans own these parks and they shouldn't have to empty their wallets to gain access and enjoy them. This fee increase will price Montana families out of our public lands and undercut our growing outdoor economy. In 2016, visitors to Montana's national parks spent \$547 million and supported over 9,000 jobs in the state. Drastically raising entry fees threatens the livelihood of gateway communities and their small businesses.

At this point, the National Park Service maintenance backlog is \$11.3 billion. This is a critical issue for our public land economy. Yet the National Park Service's own estimate indicates that the proposed fee increase would only raise \$69 million, less than one percent of the funds needed to address the deferred maintenance backlog. This fee increase, which comes just two years after a previous fee increase, is particularly concerning following the submission of the President's 2018 budget proposal, which cuts a staggering \$380 million from the National Park Service budget, including a cut of \$93 million to the facility operations and maintenance budget. To propose entry fee increases, while also proposing extensive cuts to the National Park Service's budget, essentially shifts costs to park visitors. And it doesn't even make a dent in the backlog.

Our national parks need to be adequately funded and maintained so that they remain accessible for all. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I stand ready to work with you to make sure our parks have the resources they need for regular maintenance. I encourage you to work creatively with the President and Congress to develop a more realistic approach to addressing the deferred maintenance backlog while still allowing Montana families to afford to visit and enjoy their national parks.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester