

DOC HASTINGS, WA  
CHAIRMAN  
DON YOUNG, AK  
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX  
ROB BISHOP, UT  
DOUG LAMBORN, CO  
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA  
PAUL C. BROUN, GA  
JOHN FLEMING, LA  
TOM McCLINTOCK, CA  
GLENN THOMPSON, PA  
CYNTHIA LUMMIS, WY  
DAN BENISHEK, MI  
JEFF DUNCAN, SC  
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO  
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ  
RAUL R. LABRADOR, ID  
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL  
BILL FLORES, TX  
JON RUNYAN, NJ  
MARK AMODEI, NV  
MARKWAYNE MULLIN, OK  
CHRIS STEWART, UT  
STEVE DAINES, MT  
KEVIN CRAMER, ND  
DOUG LAMALFA, CA  
JASON SMITH, MO

TODD YOUNG  
CHIEF OF STAFF

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**On Wednesday, October 16, 2013**  
**Full Committee Oversight Hearing on**

***"As Difficult As Possible: The National Park Service's Implementation of the Government Shutdown"***

PETER A. DeFAZIO, OR  
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER  
ENI F. H. FALOMAVAEGA, AS  
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ  
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA  
RUSH HOLT, NJ  
RAUL M. GRIJALVA, AZ  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU  
JIM COSTA, CA  
GREGORIO KILLI CAMACHO SABLAN, CNMI  
NIKI TSONGAS, MA  
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR  
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI  
TONY CARDENAS, CA  
STEVEN HORSFORD, NV  
JARED HUFFMAN, CA  
RAUL RUIZ, CA  
CAROL SHEA-PORTER, NH  
ALAN LOWENTHAL, CA  
JOE GARCIA, FL  
MATTHEW CARTWRIGHT, PA

PENNY DODGE  
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

To anyone trying to follow or make sense of the National Park Service's policies during this unfortunate government shutdown – I would say good luck. Their policies have been arbitrary, inconsistent and ever changing. Their actions appear to be motivated by two things: 1) An attempt to make the shutdown as painful and visible as possible; and 2) Because of the backlash, an attempt to squash the ensuing bad PR.

This is no way to run a government agency and no way to treat the American people across the country who visit, live or work on national park land. The actions of the Obama Administration have sullied our great national parks system.

In their most egregious act, the National Park Service erected barricades around open air parks and memorials, areas that are open 24/7, 365 days a year. This is in direct contradiction to what happened during the last government shutdown 17 years ago.

The Obama Administration's barricading of these sites it not something they are required to do, it is something they are CHOOSING to do.

Furthermore, they appear to only be barricading the highly visible sites. For example, the Lincoln Memorial and World War II Memorial are barricaded, but people are currently free to walk around the Washington D.C. World War I Memorial and the Japanese Americans Memorial – both open air sites.

Thus far, we've heard excuses from the Obama Administration, ranging from trash collection and maintenance to security concerns. Yet one by one, it's been confirmed that these excuses are...excuses. The Mayor of Washington D.C. declared that they will collect trash in national parks around the city. As for security, it has been reported that there are just as many National Park Police working along the National Mall now as before the shutdown. There is no reason for these barricades.

To add to that, the National Park Service's selective reversal of policies has been even more confusing.

For example, the Administration realized its mistake only after public pressure built. As a result, they agreed to allow World War II veterans with the Honor Flight program to visit their memorial and exercise their First Amendment rights. While this is good news for these veterans, it is not appropriate for the National Park Service to be denying these same rights to others who want to visit these open-air parks and memorials.

The Obama Administration has also forced privately operated sites and businesses to close just because they happen to be located on public lands. These are businesses that don't receive a dime of taxpayer dollars to operate. Once again, after intense public and legal pressure, the Park Service has suddenly allowed some of these sites to re-open while others with no explanation remain closed. I hope to hear from our witnesses today about why this was allowed to happen in the first place and what changed to prompt the Park Service's sudden reversal.

In addition, the Obama Administration at first refused to allow states to pay to keep national parks in their states open. But, in what has now become a recurring theme, the Park Service suddenly changed their mind after more than a week of public backlash.

I do want to point out that during the last government shutdown in 1995-96, states were allowed to pay to keep National Parks open and were later reimbursed by the federal government. There is absolutely no reason why it should be any different this time under the Obama Administration. Erroneous claims by the Interior Department that they can't or may not be able to reimburse states simply defy history.

At today's hearing we expect to get answers, not excuses, and to get to the bottom of when and how all of these arbitrary decisions were made, and by whom.

The past two and a half weeks have also raised broader questions about how the National Park Service is run. This shouldn't be the only time we take a look at how the Park Service operates and interacts with all states, counties, private businesses and private property owners. The Committee on Natural Resources expects to continue its oversight of the Park Service's actions, as we have with the other federal land-management agencies.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

###