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## While Administration Talks Spending Freeze, Congress Prepares to Create New \$50 Million Park in the Caribbean

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Wednesday, President Obama is expected to propose a [three-year spending freeze](#) during his State of the Union Address. As one senior administration official explained: "*You can't afford to do everything that you might have always wanted to do...you have to take steps to control spending.*"

Unfortunately, the Democrat Majority in Congress doesn't seem to share the President's new position on fiscal responsibility.

Just hours before the President's announcement, the House will consider H.R. 3726, a bill to establish the Castle Nugent Historic Site on St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. The National Park Service estimates that it will cost up to **\$50 million** to acquire the privately-owned land for this 2,900 acre park and nearly **\$1 million** a year to operate.

*"Unemployment is at 10 percent, million are without jobs, and yet Democrats in Congress believe that buying beach-front property in the Caribbean is the best use of taxpayer dollars? The government cannot afford the \$50 million price tag, nor can the vast majority of Americans afford to even visit this park," said House Natural Resources Ranking Member Doc Hastings. "The public debt is \$7.78 trillion and we face soaring budget deficits. If the President is truly serious about changing course and controlling spending, he will support Republican efforts to oppose this bill and restore fiscal discipline to Congress."*

### **Concerns with H.R. 3726:**

- Nearly all of the 2,900 acres of land to be designated on St. Croix is privately owned and acquisition will cost up to **\$50 million**.
- The National Park Service has yet to complete a Congressionally-authorized feasibility study of this park proposal, intended to help Congress craft better legislation. They have asked that consideration of creating the park be deferred until this study, that is costing taxpayers approximately **\$500,000**, is complete.
- The National Park Service currently has a \$9 billion maintenance backlog; it should not be acquiring more land until it can properly manage the land it already owns.
- The bill does not include a "willing seller" provision needed to guarantee the rights of

private property owners. Written consent should be included to ensure that land owners are not forced into selling their land.

- In addition to the 2,900 acres of dry land, the boundaries of the park would extend three miles out into the ocean. This could result in limited or banned fishing in this area, just as it is at the Virgin Islands National Park that surrounds two-thirds of St. John Island.

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