

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 20, 2022

The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretaries Haaland and Vilsack,

Our nation owes our veterans, Gold Star Families, and military servicemembers an unpayable debt. While we must always recognize and honor the valor, courage, and sacrifice of our military members and their families, the month of May marks a particularly important time to remember our fallen heroes on Memorial Day. Memorial Day, which falls on Monday, May 30th, this year, not only serves as a solemn day to remember the brave military servicemembers who gave their lives for this country, but is also an important time for veterans, Gold Star Families, and current military servicemembers to turn to the outdoors for healing and reflection.

To promote better access to our national parks and public lands for veterans and their families, on December 27, 2021, President Biden signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022, which included the Alexander Lofgren Veterans in Parks (VIP) Act.¹ The Alexander Lofgren VIP Act codified free America the Beautiful Passes (the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands pass) for active duty military and provided lifetime passes to veterans and Gold Star Families at no cost. This bipartisan legislation was championed by over 160 bipartisan and bicameral Members of Congress and 50 organizations including the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, VoteVets, and The Mission Continues.²

Despite NDAA becoming law in December 2021, lifetime passes for veterans and Gold Star Families are not yet being distributed and no date has been announced for distribution to begin. With the upcoming Memorial Day holiday and summer rapidly approaching, millions of veterans and Gold Star Families are planning visits to our national parks and federal lands to recreate and enjoy time together in the outdoors. We owe it to these veterans and Gold Star Families to make sure that they can access our parks and federal lands with the America the Beautiful lifetime passes they have been promised.

It is imperative that the U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture work together to immediately ensure that the new America the Beautiful lifetime passes are made available by Memorial Day so our nation's heroes can access the lands that they fought and sacrificed to protect. We also encourage your agencies to make information about these passes publicly available to ensure that veterans and Gold Star Families are aware of their eligibility for free access to our federal lands. Thank you for your attention to this matter and we

¹ Public Law 117-81, Section 641.

² "What They Are Saying: The VIP Act," <https://republicans-naturalresources.house.gov/newsroom/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=409870>.

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look forward to the prompt distribution of lifetime passes to our nation's veterans and Gold Star Families.

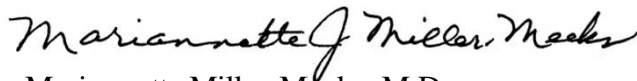
Sincerely,



John Boozman
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress