

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT VOGEL, SUPERINTENDENT, NATIONAL MALL AND MEMORIAL PARKS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, CONCERNING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CLOSURE IMPACTS ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.**

**January 30, 2014**

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, I appear before you today to discuss the National Park Service's operations in Washington, D.C. during the Federal government shutdown.

From October 1 through October 16, 2013, the National Park Service, along with other bureaus and offices of the Department of the Interior, implemented a shutdown of our activities due to a lapse in appropriations.

In a shutdown caused by a lapse in appropriations, all Federal agencies are required by law to shut down any activities funded by annual appropriations that are not excepted by law. Because the Antideficiency Act prohibits Federal agency officials from incurring financial obligations in the absence of appropriations, the NPS was forced to close all 401 National Park units – from the Grand Canyon to the National Mall – and suspend operations. All park grounds, visitor centers, concessions, and park roads were required to be closed, and more than 20,000 NPS employees were furloughed.

The NPS closure determination did not apply to through-roads in parks that provided primary access between points located outside of the parks, such as Rock Creek Parkway. It also did not apply to First Amendment activities at the National Mall and Memorial Parks and at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.

During the closure, the National Park Service maintained law enforcement staff, including services provided by the U.S. Park Police and rangers for emergency and disaster assistance, and coordinated with the government of the District of Columbia on road closures and other critical life and safety issues. We also maintained our firefighting programs and surveillance activities as these are essential for the protection of life and property. Projects that were funded from non-lapsing appropriations also continued.

There was great deal of attention paid to the implementation of the shutdown with respect to the monuments and memorials under the care of the NPS on the National Mall. On a normal day, there are 300 National Mall and Memorial Park employees on duty. The rangers are on site to provide eyes and ears for the U.S. Park Police and ensure the safekeeping of our national treasures, enhance the visitor experience by sharing the history the memorials commemorate, keep the grounds and restrooms clean, maintain the landscape and fountains, and oversee special events that happen almost daily.

All but a dozen of the National Mall and Memorial Parks employees were furloughed during the shutdown. Even though the U.S. Park Police commissioned officers were excepted from the furlough, given the limited staff resources during the shutdown, prudent and practical steps were taken to secure life and property at these national icons where security has become increasingly complex in a post-9/11 world.

In managing the closure, we worked to balance our legal obligations with the needs of our veterans who often visit war memorials on the National Mall. Throughout the shutdown, we worked with the Honor Flight Network and others to try to ensure that veterans, including Honor Flight groups and members of their families, were not turned away from visiting the World War II Memorial and other war memorials.

The closure of national parks due to the lapse in appropriations had real and far-reaching impacts across the country: on families whose long-time plans were foiled; on businesses and communities who rely on national parks as economic engines; and on our employees who were furloughed or who have to deliver difficult news to visitors and perform functions that are antithetical to why many of us joined the National Park Service. We are very aware that the District of Columbia government and businesses and organizations that operate in the District, as well as District residents, experienced disproportionate negative impacts from the closures of the sites managed by the National Park Service. We have a great deal of sympathy for everyone that experienced a disruption of activity and loss of revenue during that time.

The NPS takes great pride in caring for our national treasures and in welcoming millions of visitors. Making our sites unavailable to the public was painful to our staff, but necessary under the law. It was an enormous relief when Congress approved appropriations to fund the government through the remainder of fiscal year 2014 and we hope to have continuous funding in the years ahead.

I would be glad to respond to any questions you may have.