

Hon. _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative _____:

On May 7, the House Natural Resources Committee unanimously approved H.R. 3094, the National Park Centennial Fund Act. This historic legislation will authorize the National Park Centennial Challenge, an innovative, ten-year program to help restore and revitalize America's National Park System in preparation for its 100th birthday in 2016. As a broad national coalition of partners who believe taking care of America's national parks should be a national priority, we are writing to ask you to consider co-sponsoring this important bill, and to let key members of your leadership know you are interest in seeing it taken up on the House floor and passed expeditiously.

The Centennial Challenge would foster a partnership between the federal government and private American citizens by coupling new philanthropic and other non-federal contributions with federal dollars to repair and enhance the parks with significant, needed projects and prototype programs throughout the system beyond what is possible through the yearly federal budget and appropriations process. Recently, the Interior Department announced a list of projects and programs at 72 national parks in 39 states that will go forward this year with the \$25 million federal match Congress appropriated for FY 2008 to jumpstart the Centennial Challenge. That still leaves substantial non-federal dollars on the table for first-round centennial projects just waiting for enactment of the full, ten-year program. (To get an idea of the scope of these first-round projects, a look at the projects in your area that are going forward now, and the ones still waiting for the Centennial Challenge to be fully authorized, please see the attached information.)

Today, our national parks are at a critical crossroads as to whether they will continue to serve, educate, inspire and enrich the next generation of American families in a robust and meaningful way. The Centennial Challenge seizes an historic opportunity to help the parks not seen since President Eisenhower launched the Mission 66 program in recognition of the park system's 50th birthday over 40 years ago. Studies show for every dollar spent on the national parks, four dollars are generated in the economy – a fourfold return on investment! With the national parks still the federal entity most admired by the American people according to a recent Harris poll, if ever there were an issue on which all Members of Congress can come together to do something meaningful and lasting for the American people and the places that define our shared history, experience, and values – this is it. Please join as a cosponsor of the National Park Centennial Fund Act.