

NEWS

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CONCESSIONERS URGE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION TO HELP PARK VISITORS HAVE GREAT EXPERIENCES

Washington, D.C. – National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) Counselor Derrick Crandall told Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee members that the National Park Service (NPS) “is capital-strapped and has a well-documented inability to maintain its infrastructure ... to meet visitor needs and expectations. Concessioners have been, are and can be key partners in overcoming these challenges.”

The December 8 hearing on an Obama Administration proposal for new authorities for NPS and highlighted bipartisan interest in preparing the National Park Service (NPS) for its Centennial in 2016. Mr. Crandall offered forward looking testimony detailing innovative ways concessioners can help the Park Service serve its visitors for the next 100 years. NPS Director Jon Jarvis, National Park Foundation (NPF) President & CEO Will Shafroth and National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) President & CEO Theresa Pierno also testified.

Mr. Crandall explained to the unusually large and bipartisan groups of Senators participating in the hearing that most of the National Park System’s iconic lodges were built and have been maintained with private dollars. These expenditures, he told the panel, “don’t require offsets, don’t use taxpayer dollars, don’t add to the nation’s deficit.” “...concessioners can be a significant player in reducing NPS’ deferred maintenance backlog now facing American taxpayers with a few changes...” He offered several ideas including encouraging and rewarding concessioner excellence, appropriate use of Leaseholder Surrender Interest (LSI), lengthening of concessioner contracts, flexibility in meeting contemporary visitor wants and needs, increases in operating times and seasons, and expanding visitor services in many NPS units that are currently largely invisible to the public.

Mr. Crandall praised NPS for using the Centennial to invite all Americans to their national parks through the Find Your Park campaign, Every Kid in a Park initiative and more. “But this invitation is just a first step. We need to be prepared to deliver great experiences in these great places. And that takes money and staff and facilities. This is the challenge of the Centennial and beyond, and where we need the help of the Congress.”

NPHA’s full testimony – including a letter advocating for a new source of funding through the federal gas tax called “Penny for Parks” – can be read and downloaded [here](#). The hearing was livestreamed and can be watched [here](#).

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The National Park Hospitality Association (NPHA) – is the national trade association of the businesses that provide lodging, food services, gifts and souvenirs, equipment rentals, transportation and other visitor services in the National Park System. Concessioners have played an important role in creating lasting national park memories for more than 125 years. Concessioners operate in more than 100 national park units with combined sales exceeding \$1.2 billion annually and \$100 million+ in franchise fees paid to the National Park Service. The in-park concessioner workforce of some 25,000 persons assists visitors an estimated 100 million times annually. Information on national park concessioners is at www.parkpartners.org.