

October 15, 2018

Mr. Brian Joyner
Chief of Staff, National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Park Service
900 Ohio Drive SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Joyner:

We write to express our deep concern over proposed rulemaking RIN 1024-AE45, issued August 7, 2018, which would revise the National Park Service's protest permitting process regarding demonstrations at the National Mall, Memorial Parks, and President's Park.

This proposal would infringe on Americans' rights to free speech and assembly. Forcing Americans to pay to lawfully assemble at our most iconic and politically significant sites places a financial barrier that precludes equal opportunity and access, dissuading and prohibiting Americans from demonstrating. The ability to afford fees for permits must not be a factor in who gets the opportunity to protest on these public lands. Introducing fees for First Amendment demonstrations would represent an overwhelming departure from American values.

We strongly urge you to revise the proposed rule and maintain access to vibrant, participatory democracy for all Americans regardless of socioeconomic status or support from wealthy donors. Protesting is a cornerstone of American democracy. The First Amendment of the Constitution guarantees "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech ... or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Over centuries, Americans have come together from near and far and lifted their voices, from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech advancing the civil rights movement to the 2017 Women's March, the largest demonstration in American history. Americans have cried out signifying ardent diversity of thought on a wide variety of issues spanning from war and peace to the economy, the environment, civil rights, human rights, and more. There is a fundamental personal dignity in protest—the insistence that one's voice matters. Protesting is also a patriotic act, as Americans show up to help steer the path of our country. As we work to fulfill the promise of this country, we must never restrict access to the public lands surrounding its halls of power.

Thank you for your commitment to preserving our cultural history and natural resources. As you work to manage an increase in requests for permits and maintain your commitment to preserving visitor experience, resource protection, and public safety, we trust you will

reconsider this proposal and ensure that the right of all Americans to express their beliefs in our nation's capital will be safeguarded.

Sincerely,

American Hiking Society
American Library Association
American Public Health Association
Americans for Financial Reform
Anti-Defamation League
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education Professionals
Association of Research Libraries
Athlete Ally
The Avarna Group
Bend the Arc
Bold Alliance
Brown Environmentalist
Brown People Camping
Californians for Western Wilderness
Campaign for Accountability
Catharsis on the Mall
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Citizen's Climate Lobby
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Common Cause
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
CREDO
Defend Our Future
Defending Rights & Dissent
Democracy for America
Diverse Environmental Leaders
Dogwood Alliance
Earth Ethics
Earthjustice
Earthwise Productions
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Defense Fund

Friends of the Earth US
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
Government Accountability Project
Green Muslims
GreenLatinos
Hip Hop Caucus
Hipcamp
Hispanic Access Foundation
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights Watch
Interfaith Power & Light
Jews United for Justice
Lambda Legal
Latino Outdoors
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of the United States
MoveOn
NAACP
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Federation of the Blind
National Juvenile Justice Network
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Resources Defense Council
National Women's Law Center
New Mexico Voices for Children
Next 100 Coalition
Oceana
Oil Change International
Outdoor Muslims
Patagonia
People For the American Way Foundation

Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Praxis Project
Project On Government Oversight
Public Citizen
SAGE
SEIU
Services, Immigrant Rights & Education
Network (SIREN)
Sierra Club
Southern Poverty Law Center
Transforming Youth Outdoors
Veterans For Peace
The Wilderness Society
Win Without War
Women's March