

United States Senate

January 5, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Acting Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Bernhardt,

Thank you for your diligent service to our country and its public lands in your capacity as Deputy Secretary and I look forward to continuing to work with you. I especially want to thank you and our dear friend Secretary Zinke for your commitment to protecting public access to our public lands and National Parks during the current lapse in appropriations. In the meantime, local gateway communities and private citizens continue to bear the burden of supporting many services in our National Parks. Therefore, I encourage you to find a path forward to help relieve these local communities and further protect our nation's natural treasures.

Maintaining open access to our National Parks during the current lapse in appropriations has been critical to our gateway communities who rely on tourism activities in the winter season to carry them through the months of lower visitation. Private companies and local citizens have volunteered their time and are covering costs to keep some operations running. In Yellowstone National Park for instance, Xanterra has partnered with other local concessionaires to provide the support necessary, like road grooming, to keep activities such as guided winter use and public viewing of some of the Park's popular attractions in continued operation. These activities, critical to Montana's \$7 billion outdoor economy, would not be possible without the Department's decision to keep our Parks open during this lapse in appropriations.

While guided tours and public access continues in our National Parks, other visitor services like bathroom sanitation and trash collection have halted. While some local residents in the towns of Gardiner and Cooke City are volunteering to clean and stock bathrooms and collect trash, I remain concerned a lapse in these services will pose a significant risk to property and public health.

As the Antideficiency Act prohibits continued operations during a lapse in appropriations, the law, as your guidance states, does provide exception for emergencies to protect life and property. As such, I urge you to reconsider a lapse in these services and any others eligible under this exception to the Act and provide additional support to our gateway communities and National Parks.

Thank you for your immediate consideration.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
U.S. Senator