

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3  
INTRODUCED BY D. WEINBERG

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA RECOGNIZING THE SIZEABLE CULTURAL, NATURAL, AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS THAT NATIONAL PARKS, BATTLEFIELDS, AND MONUMENTS MAKE TO THE STATE AND RECOGNIZING THAT DOCUMENTED AND SUBSTANTIAL MAINTENANCE BACKLOGS AND ANNUAL OPERATIONS BUDGET SHORTFALLS AT NATIONAL PARKS, BATTLEFIELDS, AND MONUMENTS PUT THE PARKS AND BUSINESSES THAT DEPEND ON HEALTHY PARKS AT RISK; AND URGING MONTANA'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO INITIATE APPROPRIATIONS ACTIONS TO RESTORE NATIONAL PARKS, BATTLEFIELDS, AND MONUMENTS TO THEIR FORMER STATURE BY THE CENTENNIAL OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM IN 2016.

WHEREAS, Montana's citizens, communities, children, and travel industry have a great interest in ensuring that health, public and economic benefits, and welfare of the state's national parks, battlefields, and monuments are well maintained and protected for present and future generations; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 69% of Montana's nonresident summer vacationers visit Yellowstone or Glacier National Park, which generates substantial economic benefit for Montana through employment, tax revenue, visitor spending, business expenditures to service visitors, and National Park Service expenditures for park employee salaries, supplies, services, construction and maintenance programs, and other benefits; and

WHEREAS, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released in 2006 documented that National Park System operating budgets, when adjusted for inflation, are declining and that the accommodation of newly mandated responsibilities, including rising energy prices, homeland security requirements, congressionally approved pay raises, and other mandates, has resulted in substantial park operations cutbacks; and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service has identified a backlog of between \$4.9 billion and \$7 billion for overdue maintenance, road repair, and other infrastructure repair resulting from decades of annual shortfalls in parks' operating budgets; and

WHEREAS, a series of business plan analyses conducted by business and policy experts in conjunction with the National Park Service indicate that the parks' annual operations budget shortfall is in excess of \$800 million, at least 32% short of what is needed to operate all national parks, an estimated 35% short of the amount needed to operate Yellowstone National Park, and a 36% shortfall for Glacier National Park; and

WHEREAS, conservation and wise stewardship of our national parks' diverse natural resources are fundamental to sustaining visitor experience and maintaining and enhancing visitation levels; and

WHEREAS, chronic underfunding of national parks, battlefields, and monuments puts Montana's communities, economies, and businesses at risk and thwarts the National Park Service mandate to provide for the enjoyment of the parks in a manner and means that will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

(1) That deterioration of the infrastructure, visitor services, and natural resources of the national parks, monuments, and battlefields in the state resulting from chronic underfunding is an issue of great concern to the citizens, communities, businesses, and travel industry in Montana.

(2) That Montana's Congressional Delegation be urged to initiate actions that result in full funding of the National Park Service annual operations budgets and in elimination of maintenance and road repair backlogs for all park, battlefield, and monument units by the National Park System centennial in 2016.

(3) That the Secretary of State send copies of this resolution to the members of the Montana Congressional Delegation, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and the Director of the National Park Service.

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