

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We are alarmed that the National Park Service is currently in the process of doubling the number of U.S. Park Police officers in Washington, D.C. with the goal of transforming it into a federal police force to be deployed across the city rather than following its mission of safeguarding national monuments, icons, and visitors.

The administration is on a deliberate hiring spree to exploit the U.S. Park Police's jurisdiction and turn it into a tool of the President for him and his ideological extremists to impose their will on the streets of D.C. Commandeering the U.S. Park Police is not an earnest effort to help protect the Lincoln Memorial or improve motorists' safety on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. According to a strategy memo obtained by *The Washington Post*, a goal for the force is to "establish the U.S. Park Police as the premier law enforcement agency in DC, capable of keeping DC safe regardless of inaction by MPD [Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia] or inaction by the DC City Council."¹

In fact, the administration is in such a hurry to get these new officers on board that it is offering \$70,000 hiring bonuses and a promise of a "streamlined, virtual hiring process with quick turnaround".² There is no psychological testing or physical fitness testing. In fact, applicants are allowed to submit a "self-attestation" in place of an in-person physical fitness test, an affront to the gold standard of federal law enforcement hiring – and standards that MPD itself follows in its hiring practices.

There is no evidence of an uptick in crime on park service land or increased threats to national monuments – this haste in both a hiring spree and waiving of critical testing and standards are clear signs that the administration is hijacking this federal police force for its own authoritarian purposes. And the administration may seek other mechanisms (legal or otherwise) to further expand the U.S. Park Police, increasing this authoritarian threat.

¹ George, Olivia and Natanson, Hannah. "U.S. Park Police seeks hundreds more officers amid Trump's crime crackdown". *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2025/10/31/park-police-expansion-dc/>

² National Park Service. "Become a United States Park Police Officer." Accessed November 10, 2025. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/uspp/become-a-uspp-officer.htm>.

Amassing what is effectively a new federal police force is yet another Trump administration effort to consolidate and centralize his power as he continues to intimidate protestors, threaten free speech, and desensitize Americans to military presence on the streets. Reshaping the U.S. Park Police into a police force with a mission to carry out the President's policy priorities hands President Trump a cadre of his own armed officers with widespread jurisdiction at his fingertips.

Continuing to amass more armed forces – police and military – under direct control of President Trump in Washington D.C. is unprecedented and dangerous. We demand you suspend the hiring process and provide full and complete responses to the following questions no later than December 19, 2025:

1. How do the jurisdictions and authorities of the U.S. Park Police and MPD differ in Washington, D.C.? Please provide a specific detailed explanation of your concurrent jurisdictions with federal, state and local law enforcement in the Washington, D.C. area and the role each agency plays in taking law enforcement actions.
2. MPD and the U.S. Capitol Police have an agreement that MPD cannot enter the U.S. Capitol Building and Congressional office buildings. Does the U.S. Park Police abide by that same limitation, and will they continue to do so? What agreement does Park Police have with MPD and USCP?
3. Does the Park Police have an interagency or other type agreement with MPD? If so, please provide that document.
4. Does the Park Police have an interagency or other type agreement with any other federal, state or local law enforcement agency in the National Capital Region? If so, please provide those documents.
5. Will the U.S. Park Police be used as a general police force or will deployments – regular and occasional – be limited to those involving National Park Service property? If general policing activities will be routinely performed, please provide a specific explanation of the authority, scope and schedule for such activities.
6. Does the National Park Service have a workforce planning analysis for this hiring increase? If so, please provide a copy.
7. What hiring standards are being revised, eliminated, or added for the recruiting and selection of these new hires? Please provide a copy of the current hiring standards for new law enforcement officers within the Service.
8. Reporting indicates that the agency is seeking 300 new officers. Please provide a justification for the number that includes rationale for what the duties of each of these new officers will be. What operational objective is being achieved within the Service by hiring and deploying these new officers?
9. Please describe what structure exists in the National Park Service for overseeing the USPP for communicating and enforcing, including disciplinary action, the code of conduct and use-of-force policy? How many new staff will be hired for these activities given that staffing in the District will double? Is there an independent body that reviews complaints and internal affairs investigations?
10. How will the 300 new officers, in addition to the current officers on board, be dispatched across the National Park Service's jurisdiction? Will they be deployed consistent with U.S. Park Police's primary operational mission to protect national icons and monuments?
11. What will the cost be for hiring, training, equipping, and employing 300 new officers in fiscal year 2026? What is the planned source of funding? What new contracts, such as

for recruiting or other portions of the hiring process, will be required to meet this hiring goal and to whom are these contracts being awarded? If new contracts are required, will they be competitively awarded or sole source?

12. What will the cost be in fiscal year 2027? What is the planned source of funding?
13. Beyond the current hiring expansion announcement, what is the Service's plan within the next year for personnel hiring in D.C.? Is there a plan for the U.S. Park Police to grow in Washington, D.C. beyond hiring the 300 additional officers?
14. Are there plans to hire additional officers in New York City (Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island National Historic Site and Gateway National Recreation Area) or San Francisco (Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Presidio), where there are currently other U.S. Park Police officers deployed? If so, please provide a detailed explanation of the plans.
15. Are there plans to hire additional U.S. Park Police officers in other parts of the United States, and if so, where? Please provide a detailed explanation of the plans.
16. What is the source of funding and funding authority for the \$70,000 hiring bonus advertised on the website of the National Park Service? What service agreements, if any, are new hires expected to perform for these bonuses? Do the agreements include loyalty pledges, or similar commitments, to the President or this administration? If agreements are required, please provide a copy of the agreement, to include the terms and conditions.
17. Given the new "streamlined, virtual hiring process with quick turnaround," please describe in detail each step of the new hiring process for these officers and what requirements potential officers need to meet in order to qualify for this position.
18. Has the National Park Service used a "streamlined, virtual hiring process with quick turnaround" to hire U.S. Park Police officers in the past? What is the justification for this process? Which hiring standards have been eliminated to meet this hiring objective and why were they eliminated?
19. Because law enforcement officers are empowered with taking an individual's constitutional rights away from them during the course of their duties, why is standard psychological testing not part of the hiring evaluation process to ensure the best candidates are selected? How is the Service ensuring that new hires do not have pre-existing mental health issues that would preclude them from carrying out the essential functions of being a law enforcement officer?
20. Why are applicants allowed to submit a "Self-Attestation" form for physical fitness instead of an in-person physical fitness test? How is the Service ensuring that new hires can carry out the essential functions of the position?
21. Are any of the interviews conducted in person, or is the entire hiring process conducted on Microsoft Teams as is described on the National Park Service website?

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related
Agencies

United States Senate

Committee on Appropriations



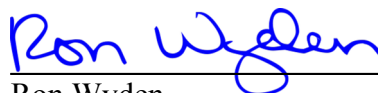
Chris Van Hollen

United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin

United States Senator



Ron Wyden

United States Senator