

Date of Hearing: August 31, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Eduardo Garcia, Chair

AJR 23 (Bigelow) – As Introduced August 24, 2017

**SUBJECT:** National Park System

**SUMMARY:** This measure would strongly encourage the Congress of the United States to support the National Park Service Legacy Act of 2017 (S. 751 and H.R. 2584) to create a reliable, predictable stream of resources to address deferred maintenance needs in America's National Park System. Specifically, **this bill:**

Makes the following findings:

- 1) America's National Park System is a living testament to our citizens' valor and nation's hardships, victories, and traditions as Americans, and has been called "America's Best Idea."
- 2) The National Park System preserves the diversity, culture, and heritage of all Americans and serves as a living classroom for future generations.
- 3) In 2016, the National Park Service celebrated its centennial and currently manages 417 nationally significant sites and an invaluable collection of more than 75,000 natural and cultural assets that span 84 million acres across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several United States territories and insular areas.
- 4) The National Park Service's mission is "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."
- 5) In 2016, 330 million visitors to the National Park System spent more than \$18 billion in the states and local communities adjacent to national parks.
- 6) In 2016, 42 million visitors to California's national parks spent an estimated \$2 billion in local gateway regions, supporting 28,900 jobs, and \$2.9 billion in economic output in the California economy.
- 7) The National Park Service has the obligation to preserve our nation's history, promote access to national parks for all citizens, stimulate revenue to sustain itself and nearby communities, educate the public about America's natural, cultural and historical resources, and provide safe facilities and environs to enjoy these resources.
- 8) The National Park Service estimated a deferred maintenance backlog of nearly \$12 billion, which includes repairs to aging historical structures, trails, sewers, drainage, thousands of miles of roads, bridges, tunnels, and other vital infrastructure.
- 9) California's national parks have a deferred maintenance backlog of more than \$1.7 billion.

10) It is the responsibility of the Congress of the United States to maintain America's national parks to ensure that our natural places and history are preserved and documented for future generations and for the adjacent communities that rely on the direct and indirect economic benefits generated by visits to national parks.

11) The Congress of the United States is currently considering bipartisan, bicameral legislation (S. 751 and H.R. 2584) called the National Park Service Legacy Act of 2017, which would establish and fund the National Park Service Legacy Restoration Fund to address the maintenance backlog of the National Park Service.

**EXISTING LAW:** Establishes the National Parks system in federal law.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown, this bill is keyed non-fiscal.

**COMMENTS:**

**Author's Statement:**

We must address the issue of deferred maintenance in our National Parks wisely and with fiscal responsibility. As a state representative of Yosemite National Park, I see first-hand the need to update the Park's aging infrastructure. The bipartisan National Park Service Legacy Act of 2017 will hopefully be a step towards addressing this significant need, and continue to preserve the beauty and resources of our nation's parks for generations to come.

**Background:** According to the author, this measure is an opportunity for the State Assembly and the State Senate to provide support for a bicameral, bipartisan congressional policy that would positively impact funding to address the estimated \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog of our nation's parks. The author includes a statement by the Pew Charitable Trusts that concurs with the need for dedicated federal funding for parks deferred maintenance. According to Pew Charitable Trust, "...with a record 331 million visitors to National Park Service sites in 2016, it's clear that Americans value these unique places—as do the nearby communities that benefited from the \$18.4 billion spent by visitors last year. With needed repairs approaching nearly \$12 billion, it's important to provide reliable annual funding soon to preserve our iconic places and pieces of our history—and keep costs from escalating. This bill is an important step toward addressing the maintenance backlog in our national parks."

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

National Park Conservation Association (Co-Sponsor)  
Yosemite/Mariposa County Tourism Bureau (Co-Sponsor)

**Opposition**

None received.

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