

(a) shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and the authorities of executive departments and agencies, or heads of such departments and agencies, vested by law, and subject to the availability of appropriations;

(b) shall not be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budget, administrative, and legislative proposals; and

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GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: This directive was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 7.

Remarks in a Discussion on the National Parks Centennial Initiative in Luray, Virginia February 7, 2007

Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. Mr. President and First Lady Laura Bush, on behalf of all of the wonderful people of the National Park Service, it is such an honor to have the First Couple here at this wonderful national park. And, ladies and gentlemen, those of you that are here at the roundtable, we look forward to this opportunity to have some discussions with you.

But we'd be very honored, Mr. President, just to get initial thoughts from you. As I introduce our President, let me just put it in this perspective: Two years ago, my wife Patricia and I had the great opportunity to spend 3 days with the President and the First Lady in Idaho, to see this couple, what the outdoors mean to them, how they recreate, how they replenish their energy. I just saw their connection. We went fishing, hiking, biking. I went home tired. [Laughter] They went home with renewed energy. [Laughter]

The First Lady. Refreshed.

Secretary Kempthorne. And I think that you see that same sort of approach—their love of the outdoors—in this President's Centennial Challenge Initiative.

So, Mr. President, thank you for all you're doing.

The President. One of the reasons I asked Dirk to be the Secretary of the Interior is because I knew that he knew how important parks are to the country. And I want to thank you and Mary for taking on your big jobs. Our national parks are really one of America's great treasures. And the fundamental question is, are we going to be wise enough to treat them as such?

When I first came into office, I was worried about a significant backlog of maintenance projects. And I want to thank Dirk for seeing through the completion or near completion of about 6,600 such projects.

And in our discussions, we talked about how to make sure the 100th anniversary of our parks, coming in 2016, really celebrates the National Park System. And so today we're going to talk about an initiative called the National Parks Centennial Initiative. And I'm looking forward to hearing from our fellow citizens about ways to make sure this initiative fully honors the Park System.

It is one thing to talk; it's another thing to act. And I've just submitted a budget to the United States Congress. In it, we've got a billion dollars new money for operating expenses. And that really helps to honor those who work hard in our Park

System. I really love being with our park rangers. These are dedicated people who have got a pretty cool job, when you think about it. [Laughter] I just want to make sure that they got the money able to do their job.

As well, we look forward to having a public-private partnership. The Federal Government will match monies raised in the private sector up to a billion dollars. Our idea is to have \$3 billion new money available for this important initiative. And I know that Dirk is going to work hard to make sure that people have their say as to how this money is spent.

And one person who has got a lot of say about the parks, in our family, is Laura. She is very much involved in our parks. She loves the outdoors. She takes a hike with her old high school buddies once a year to herald the Park System. If my entourage wasn't so big, I'd be with her. [Laughter] But it's big—[laughter]—so I stay at home.

But I really do appreciate Dirk and Mary and you all joining us. I'm looking forward to our discussion.

[At this point, the First Lady made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, thanks.

[Secretary Kempthorne made brief remarks, concluding as follows.]

Secretary Kempthorne. With that, I'm going to introduce the other members at the roundtable. Mary Bomar, who is our National Park Service Director. She is the first naturalized citizen in the United States to become Director of the National Park Service. In just a moment, Mary, I'll ask you for some comments.

Vin Cipolla, who is the president of the National Park Foundation. And he's been there for just a couple of years. And his leadership which he has brought to the foundation is just getting such high marks.

Derrick Crandall, who is the—and I look at this—the president and CEO of the

American Recreation Coalition. He's been called, interestingly enough, the recreation guru, by USA Today. He has been able to bring about organization of over 100 different entities that all believe in the outdoors and his advocacy of the outdoors.

Gene Sykes, who is the champion of the National Parks Conservation Association. Gene is a managing partner of Goldman Sachs. I know of your love of the outdoors, the backpacking that you do repeatedly, and your particular love of the parks in Alaska.

Fred Andreae, who is a trustee, Shenandoah National Park Trust. Fred is one of these examples that, as you look at the 90 years of the National Park Service, the reason they have been able to achieve greatness is because of the partnership with philanthropic communities, with friends of the parks. And, Fred, you have established that here at Shenandoah Park. We truly appreciate that.

Chas Cartwright, who is the superintendent of this magnificent park. And you just say the name "Shenandoah," and it's so historic, and it conjures up so many great things. I also noted that in the seventies, you were a river ranger on the Salmon River in Idaho. [Laughter]

Chas Cartwright. I remember it fondly.

Secretary Kempthorne. Yes, I knew that we would bond. [Laughter]

With that, let me turn to Mary Bomar for her comments.

[Director Bomar made brief remarks.]

Secretary Kempthorne. Thank you, Mary.

Mr. President, you mentioned—but I thought this would be of note, because really, it builds upon an initiative you started 5 years ago—and the President referenced the 6,600 projects that were a backlog of deferred maintenance. And here they are; these are the projects. And it just shows you what has already been underway during these last 5 years. I mean, this is significant. Now we can build upon this.

And this initiative which you have launched is not partisan, it is American. This is something that all of America can rally around, and I think this will be the reaffirmation of the parks being one of the greatest gifts to the American family.

Chas Cartwright, would you make a few comments, please, about the new perspective?

[*Mr. Cartwright made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Cartwright. So I just wanted to say, it's great having everybody here today. And thanks to the employees of Shenandoah National Park for doing such a great job.

The President. Particularly the guy who cleared the road. [*Laughter*] Listen, we want to thank you for your contributions here. We'll hear from the other members here in a second. I do want to say some-

thing to follow up on this, and Congress needs to hear loud and clear how important this initiative is. And I fully hope the citizens groups who are concerned about the parks beat a hasty trail to the Congress and remind the Congress about what we have done and what we need to do as good stewards of the parks.

Anyway, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:59 a.m. in the Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Visitor Center at Shenandoah National Park. Secretary Kempthorne referred to Gene Sykes, director and chairman of the board of trustees, National Parks Conservation Association. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and National Park Service Director Bomar.

Remarks in Shenandoah National Park in Luray February 7, 2007

Laura and I and the Secretary really appreciate the good folks here at Shenandoah National Park for their hospitality and their hard work in making this beautiful part of our country accessible to citizens.

Today I had the honor of spending time talking to a group of concerned citizens about our National Park System. We've got about 80 million acres in our Park System. There's millions and millions of visits a year by our citizens to take advantage of and participate in the special beauty of our parks. All you got to do is look out here.

We spent time talking about our understanding that these parks are national treasures, that they are fantastic places in which to learn things and to get exercise, that our parks are a way to teach our fellow citizens about the history of the country. After all, Laura and I live in the White House, which is managed by the National

Park System. Our parks are important, and the people who work in the parks are important.

I asked Dirk Kempthorne to join my administration because I know that he is committed to the National Park System. He's a man from the West who has been able to enjoy the beauty of the parks in his own home State of Idaho.

One of the things we talked about is how we can make sure the commitment that we all think is necessary to our Park System is really honored in the appropriations requests that we make to Congress.

Our parks will have its 100th anniversary in 2016. And we felt like a vital goal for this country would be to prepare those parks, to guard the parks, to conserve the parks, to make the parks relevant to the American people in honor of the 100th anniversary. And so Dirk and I and others