

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 4, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt  
Acting Secretary of the Interior  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Acting Secretary Bernhardt:

We write to express our appreciation for the efforts of the Department of the Interior (DOI) to sustain access to our national parks during the current partial shutdown. We believe, however, the Administration has the authority to do more. We write in regards to the national parks in Utah, and Zion National Park and Bryce Canyon National Park in particular.

The Antideficiency Act (31 U.S.C. §§1341 et seq.) prohibits agencies from general operations in the absence of appropriations. The Act does make a critical exception for "emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property." We believe, in the case of these national parks, public safety and property are at heightened risk, and therefore merit this exception.

Park rangers and search and rescue personnel respond to hundreds of emergency incidents in Utah parks each year. While some national parks may see a decrease in visitation during the winter season, this is not always the case. Zion has seen a surge of visitation, with as many as 11,000 people visiting the park in a single day. Only a skeleton crew is left to protect and serve these thousands of visitors.

The state of Utah has been able to reallocate money from other projects to help underwrite costs at the most visited parks, including assistance from the City of St. George, Washington County, Bryce Canyon Natural History Association, and Zion Forever Project. These entities all have limits on their resources and the State has yet to be reimbursed for their financial investment in the parks during a previous government shutdown.

We write to urgently request the DOI invoke this exception to the Antideficiency Act and immediately take emergency measures to resume operations to the fullest extent allowable under the law.

Sincerely,

  
Rob Bishop  
Member of Congress

  
Chris Stewart  
Member of Congress

  
John Curtis  
Member of Congress