



June 17, 2005

Honorable John P. Murtha  
PO Box 780  
Johnstown, PA 15907-0780

Dear Congressman Murtha,

I'm contacting you with an update on the Johnstown Rifle and Pistol Club and Virginia Citizen's Defense League Petition For Rule Making which we submitted to the Interior Department in February, and am requesting further assistance.

The good news is we are gaining legislative support and our efforts are getting national media attention. I have enclosed an article from the July issue of Guns and Ammo magazine which details the issues we have raised and mentions our coalition's goal and the Interior Department's behavior.

The bad news is the Interior Department is simply intransigent in their reluctance to engage our coalition in an honest discussion of the issues and to give the Petition a fair treatment. Both Dave \*\*\*\*\*, VCDL Executive Member, and I have attempted to contact Fish, Wildlife and Parks Secretary Paul Hoffman to determine the status of our Petition. Secretary Hoffman was present at the meeting with VCDL officials and NRA-ILA counsel when the Petition was presented.

At the time, Secretary Hoffman was friendly and seemed genuinely interested in considering our goal but suggested there might be potential issues within certain parks that may have to be addressed. The meeting ended amiably and we expected to hear from Secretary Hoffman as he promised.

To date Secretary Hoffman has refused to return multiple phone calls to provide us with information on the status of our Petition. Secretary Hoffman had even failed to respond to inquiries by the office of Montana Senator Conrad Burns, Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on the Interior. Ultimately, however, he did speak with the Senator's representative. Apparently Secretary Hoffman alluded that since he perceived no compelling political motivation for him to act on the Petition he simply assumed it would go away.

Senator Burn's office has contacted me as the result of a visit by an NRA representative who was there discussing the Petition. My name happened to come up in the discussion and one of Senator Burns' aides is from Johnstown. I was able to explain to him our goal and to outline and clarify some issues for the Senator. Senator Burns has agreed with you, Congressman, that our goal is legitimate and a valid concern and he has offered his support. The NRA also backs this change.

Our coalition hopes you can again intervene in this stalemate the Park Service has attempted to create. Quite simply, the National Parks belong to the citizens of this country and our rights should be honored within those property boundaries - as they are now in our National Forests.

Claims made by the Park Service that amending 36CFR 2.4 is totally unnecessary and would result in wide-scale poaching and crime are absurd. Concealed carry permit holders do not poach - especially with a self-defense handgun, nor do they commit any other crime. The Park Service still continues to claim it can

protect visitors to the Parks – even as yet another person was murdered recently on Dangerfield Island along the George Washington Parkway. The Park Service claims we visitors should feel safe despite knowing about the 4400 violent crimes perpetrated on victims in these supposedly safe National Parks last year.

Congressman Murtha, Park Service arguments against amending 36CFR 2.4 simply have no validity or merit but since the issue involves firearms I am realistic and completely understand the underlying political reluctance. These same types of arguments were also used in states that resisted implementing right-to-carry laws. The end result is that crime rates decrease and concealed carry permit holders commit no crimes – and even prevent them. These facts can realistically be extrapolated to the National Park system when the amendment is implemented.

There is, essentially, nothing special about a National Park except the commendable goal to maintain a unique, pristine, natural environment. The park experience, additionally, can be comparable to non-park wilderness or urban situations involving groups of people. There, citizens who lawfully carry concealed firearms interact with others who don't. There is no problem in this type of environment nor would there be if Park Service regulations were amended.

This issue really has a simple solution: amend the Park Service regulations to assimilate state concealed carry laws. Perhaps it is time Secretary Hoffman is motivated to participate in implementing change.

Thank you again for your very important initial help and for your continued support of this issue. We sincerely hope this matter can be resolved to the benefit of taxpaying National Park visitors and law-abiding citizens of this country.

Sincerely,

Rick \*\*\*\*\*  
Johnstown Rifle and Pistol Club