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April 27, 2010
The Honorable David A. Paterson
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson,

We write today regarding the very important issue of protecting our State Parks and Historic Sites. The FY 2010-2011 Executive Budget proposal sought to reduce funding for the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) by nearly \$65 million. If enacted, this proposed cut, compounded by previously implemented cuts, would result in the unprecedented closures of 55 State Parks and 14 Historic Sites throughout New York State.

By contributing a 5-to-1 return on investment to the state, parks help generate \$1.9 billion annually in economic activity. Furthermore, during times of economic uncertainty, people turn to parks and historic sites as a source of healthy and affordable recreational and educational opportunities. In fact, park visitation grew by nearly 2 million visitors last year to produce a whopping 56 million visitors.

Due to the significant role State Parks and Historic Sites play in the quality of life and economic viability of the state, both the Senate and Assembly sought to restore sufficient funding to OPRHP to prevent closures to any State Parks or Historic Sites. However, as budget negotiations continue beyond the April 1st deadline, the Legislature has thus far only agreed to pass emergency budget extender bills issued by your office. While we remain confident that a budget agreement will soon be reached in a manner which will prevent closures to State Parks and Historic Sites, expenditures authorized by the passage of extender bills should provide for funding the operation and maintenance of State Parks and Historic Sites, so that they may begin to prepare for the upcoming summer season. In order for OPRHP to begin to prepare for the summer season they do not need additional funds in the extender bills, but instead they simply require specific language allowing their office to use the already allocated funds in the extender bills for the operation and maintenance of State Parks and Historic Sites.

Using appropriated funds in this manner, is an action of fiscal prudence, as noted by a recent letter sent to you by the National Park Service. According to the letter from National Parks Service Regional Director Dennis R. Reidenbach, the closure of any State Parks and Historic Sites would jeopardize millions of dollars in Federal funding from the Federal government through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The letter also warns that closures may result in the suspension and debarment of all Federal funds—potentially billions of dollars. Given the current economic situation our state is facing we cannot risk losing this essential Federal funding.

For all the reasons mentioned above, we respectfully request that any expenditures and disbursements made from appropriations authorized by the passage of extender bills be used to operate and maintain State Parks and Historic Sites consistent with 2009-10 service levels and schedules of operations. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.



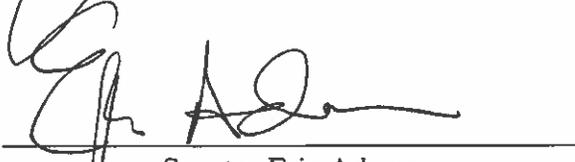
Sincerely,



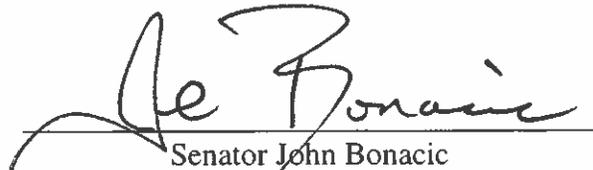
Senator José M Serrano
Chair of Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks,
Recreation



Senator Elizabeth Little
Ranking Member of Cultural Affairs,
Tourism, Parks, Recreation



Senator Eric Adams



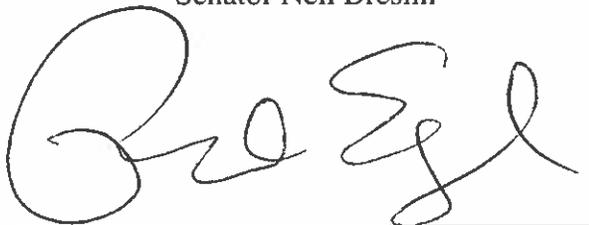
Senator John Bonacic



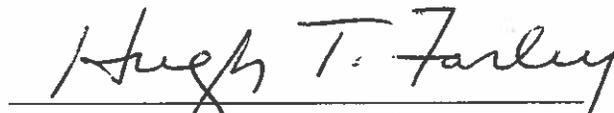
Senator Neil Breslin



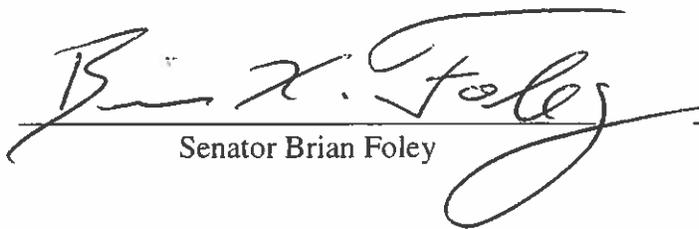
Senator Martin Dilan



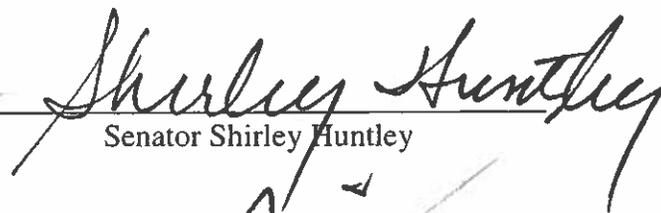
Senator Pedro Espada



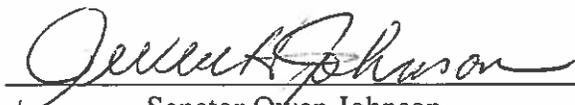
Senator Hugh Farley



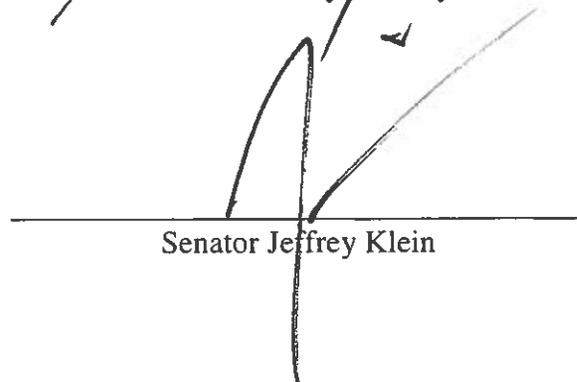
Senator Brian Foley



Senator Shirley Huntley



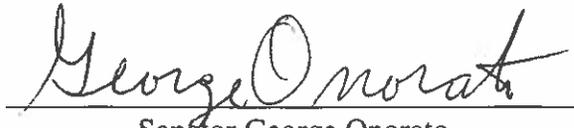
Senator Owen Johnson



Senator Jeffrey Klein



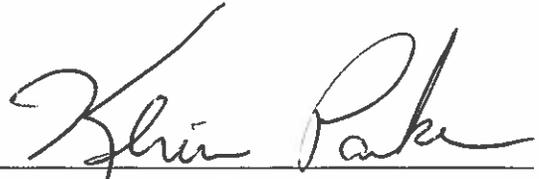
Senator Liz Krueger



Senator George Onorato



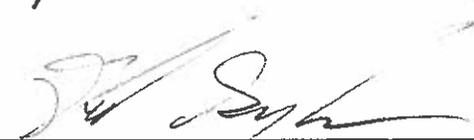
Senator Suzi Oppenheimer



Senator Kevin Parker



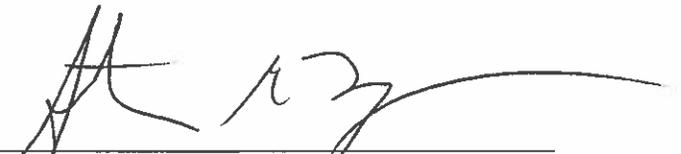
Senator Eric Schneiderman



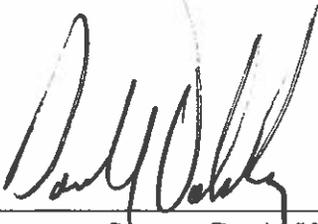
Senator Daniel Squadron



Senator William Stachowski



Senator Antoine Thompson



Senator David Valesky



Senator Dale Volker