

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

As Congress works to confront the escalating public health and economic crises due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge that future recovery legislation support the outdoor tourism economy, help create outdoor recreation and tourism jobs, and invest in our outdoor recreation small businesses by including a robust “Outdoor Restoration and Resilience Jobs” title. Similar in scale and purpose to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), this title could create as many as three million near-term jobs - in many places where unemployment is surging - by investing in the restoration and resilience of our natural resources and recreational infrastructure. This type of investment would both help the economy and help people safely enjoy recreational activities, since the outdoors generally poses a lower risk for COVID-19 transmission compared to indoor activities. On the heels of “Great Outdoors Month” and Senate passage of the landmark Great American Outdoors Act, now is the time to invest in outdoor recreation and tourism so that we can get Americans in these industries back to work.

Our nation’s outdoor economy is hurting. According to the US Census Bureau, which measured COVID-19 impacts on small businesses, 75 percent of small businesses in the category that includes outdoor recreation are struggling due to the crisis. The outdoor tourism and recreation industry, which employs 5.2 million American workers (3.4% of total U.S. employment), accounts for 2.2% of GDP, and generates \$778 billion in economic output, has gone from one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy (3.9% annual growth) to experiencing record unemployment. While it’s heartening that many Americans are turning to nearby nature with appropriate social distancing for exercise and mental health benefits, few are spending money while doing so, and many are cancelling trips, impacting outdoor tourism economies nationwide. While we support ongoing efforts to support businesses and workers in the outdoor industry by ensuring they are fully eligible for all COVID-19 recovery programs and encourage additional steps to address tariffs and fees that hit this sector particularly hard, none of these stopgap measures are in and of themselves sufficient for recovery and robust job creation.

The crisis before us requires targeted investment to reinvigorate our outdoor tourism economy and get Americans back to work. Outdoor restoration investments generate more jobs compared to other alternatives because most of the investment goes towards labor, rather than materials. According to an analysis of past federal support for the outdoor economy, conservation investments generated 15 to 33 jobs per million dollars and an economic return of \$2.4 for every \$1 invested. In addition to creating millions of desperately needed jobs, an “Outdoor Restoration and Resilience Jobs” title will improve public health by removing pollution from our air and water; expand access to nature and recreational amenities; bolster community resilience to hurricanes, inland floods, and wildfires; sequester carbon dioxide; reclaim degraded lands; and recover imperiled fish and wildlife species. These investments also support workers and industries disproportionately affected by the downturn, such as agriculture, forestry, ranching, energy, and outdoor recreation.

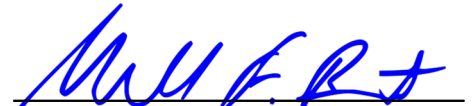
The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of outdoor recreation infrastructure. Not only does outdoor recreation serve as an outlet for individuals to enjoy natural spaces, especially during this pandemic, but it also creates opportunities to create jobs, stimulate the travel and tourism economy, and support public health. We must continue to the growth of the outdoor economy and the diverse workforce it provides.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

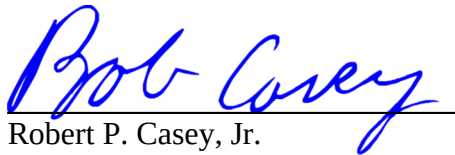
Sincerely,



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator




Michael Bennet
United States Senator



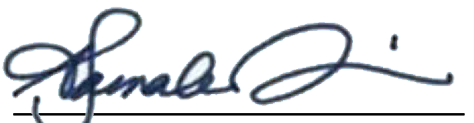
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United States Senator



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Kamala Harris
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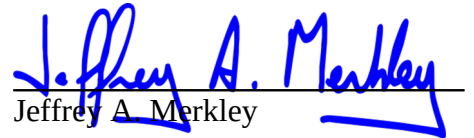
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