



# Voters' Views on the Government Shutdown and Investments in National Parks and Public Lands

*Key findings from nationwide voter survey  
Conducted November 2013  
for the*

Center for American Progress



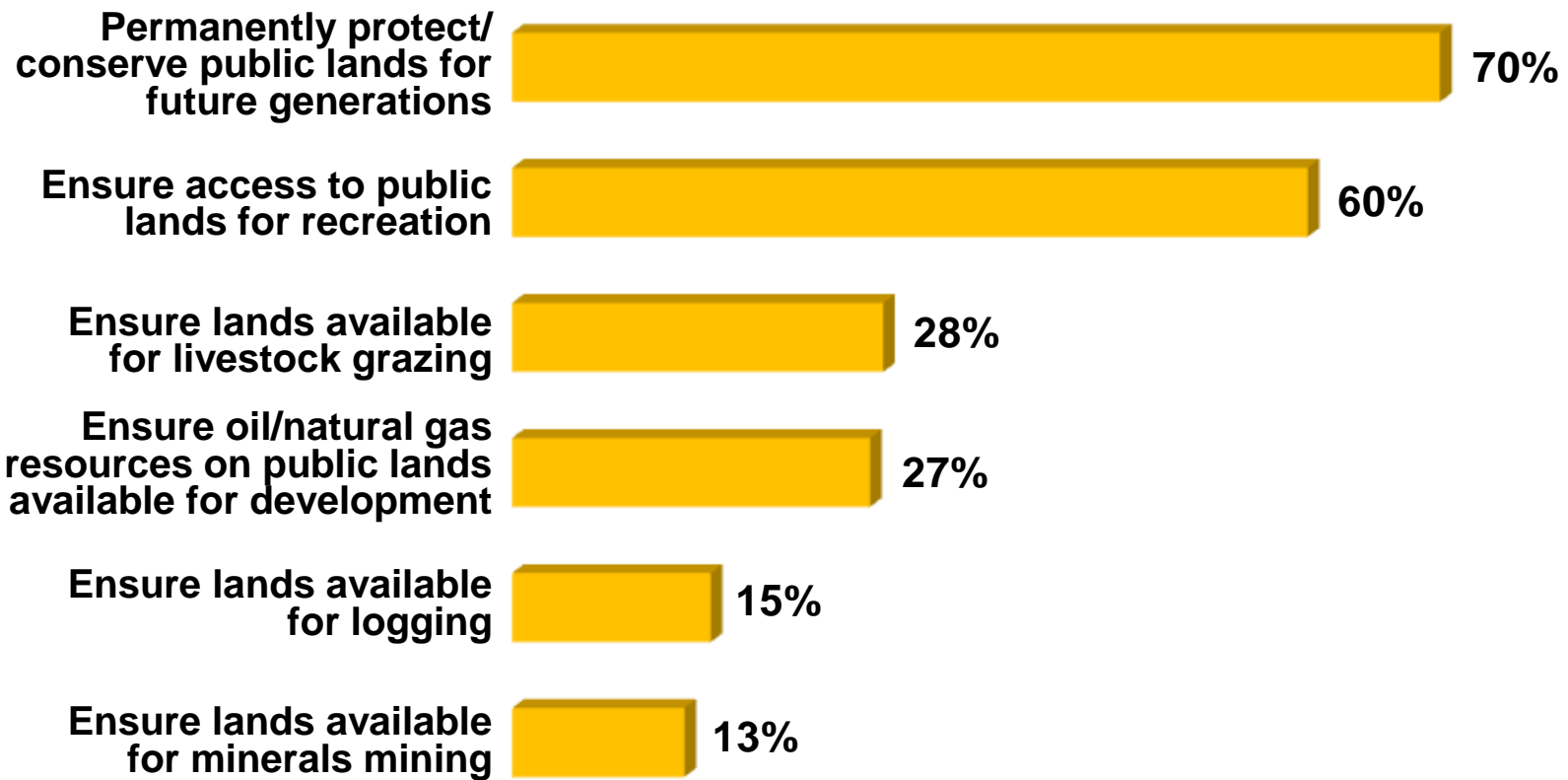


# Methodology

- Nationwide telephone survey conducted October 31 to November 4, 2013 among 1,005 adults who voted in the 2012 election
- Interviews conducted by telephone, including both landline and cell phones
- Margin of error =  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points overall, higher among subgroups

# There are two standout priorities for public lands: access to recreational activities and permanent protection.

*Very important priority\* for public lands managed by federal government*



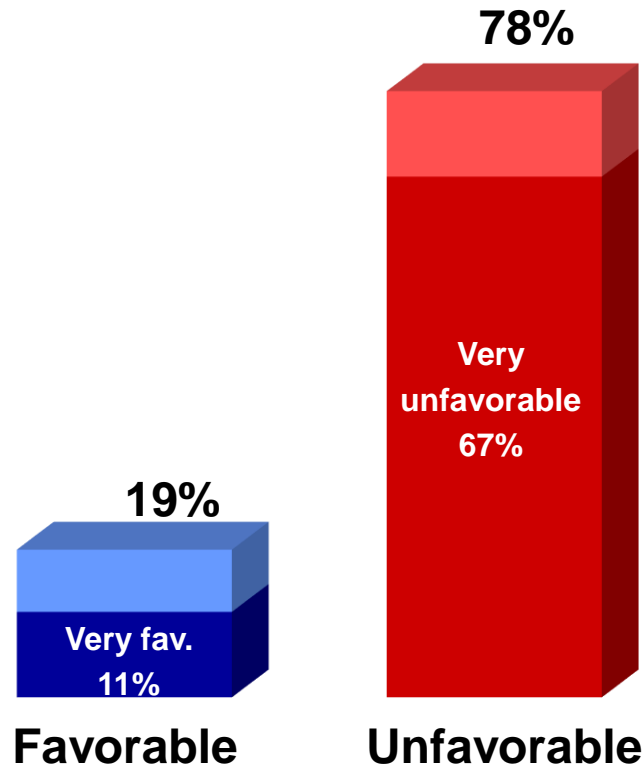
\*9-10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = extremely important priority



# **THE SHUTDOWN'S IMPACT ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS**

# Most voters have strongly negative feelings about the government shutdown.

*What is your overall opinion of the federal government shutdown that occurred a few weeks ago?*



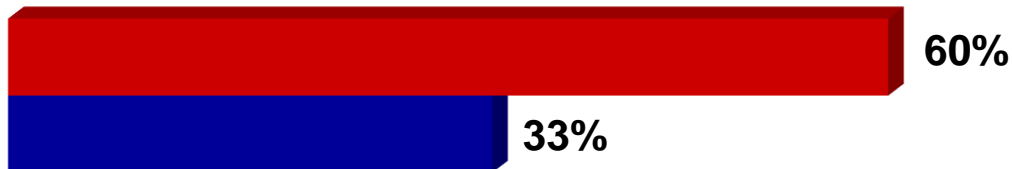
Somewhat/very unfavorable	
Democrats	92%
Independents	79%
Republicans	59%

# Republicans are more broadly blamed for the shutdown.

■ Agree ■ Disagree

Democrats    Independents    Republicans

The federal government shutdown occurred because the **Republicans in Congress were not willing enough to compromise** with President Obama



87%    57%    29%

The federal government shutdown occurred because **President Obama was not willing enough to compromise** with the Republicans in Congress



23%    55%    87%

The federal government shutdown showed that the **Tea Party has too much power** and control in Congress

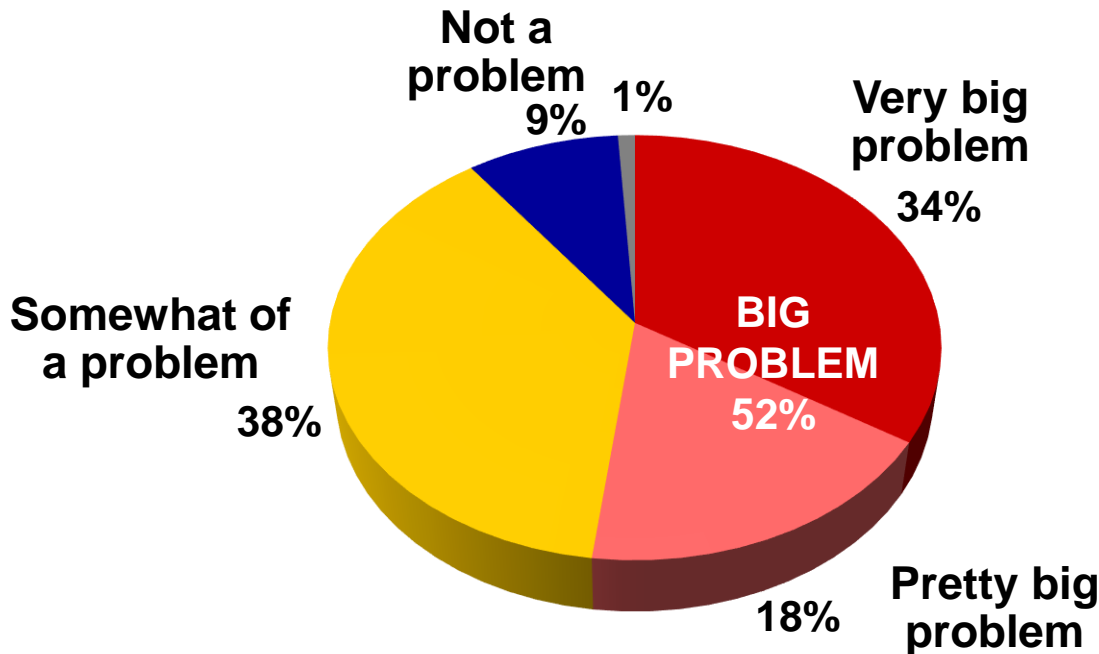


74%    45%    23%

# More than half the electorate believe that closing national parks and public lands during the shutdown was a big problem

*During the recent government shutdown, most national parks and public lands were closed to visitors. Would you say [this was a problem]?*

All voters



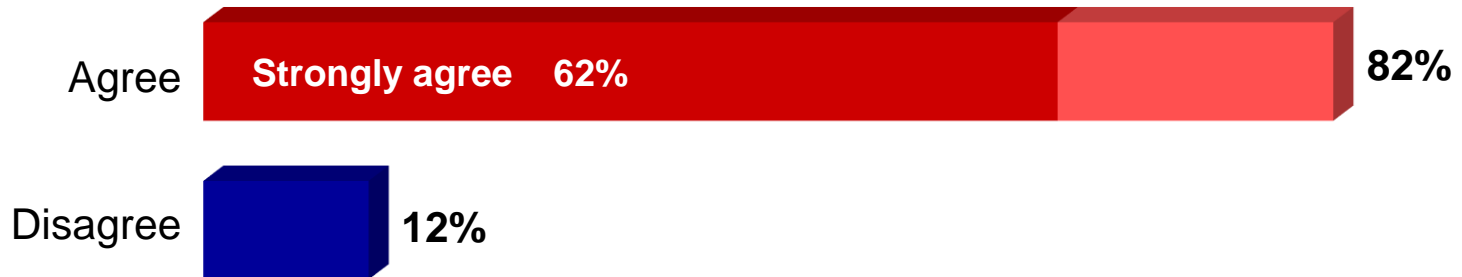
## Very/pretty big problem

Democrats	56%
Independents	50%
Republicans	47%
Northeast	47%
South	52%
Midwest	53%
West	55%
City	54%
Suburbs	52%
Small town	47%
Rural area	53%

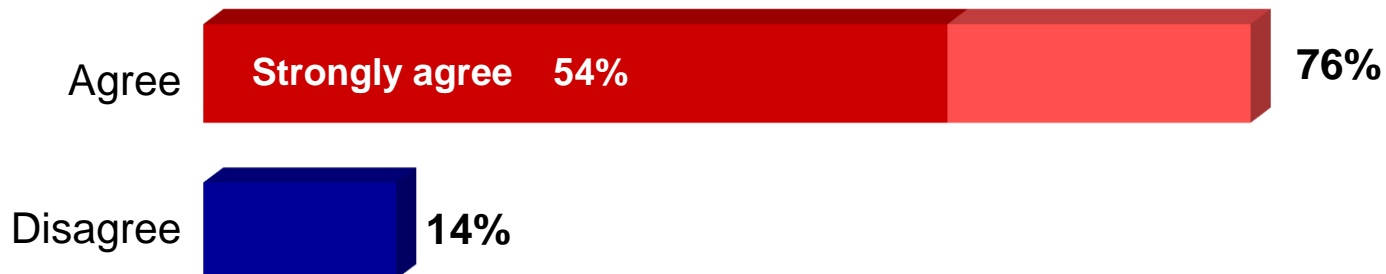


# The forced closing of national parks during the shutdown reminded voters of their importance.

The closing of the national parks during the government shutdown was a good reminder of how important the national parks are and why we need to keep them open



The federal government shutdown had a serious impact on local economies near shuttered national parks and public lands





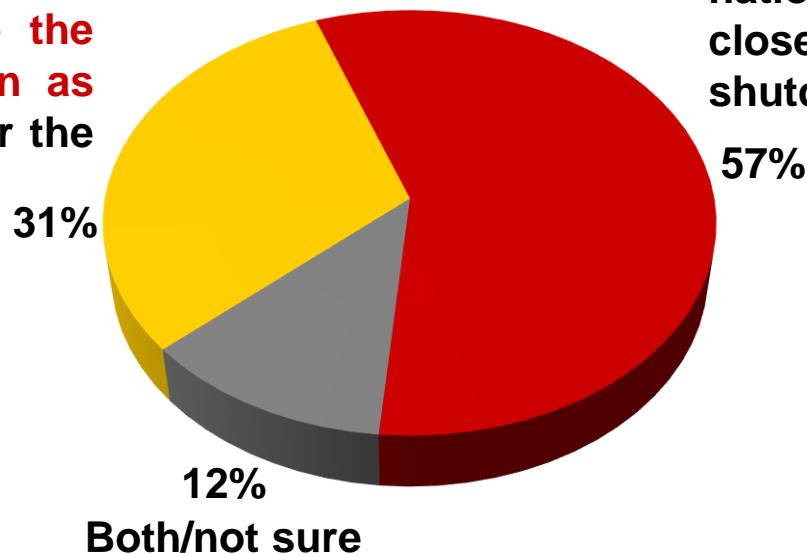


# Voters believe the parks were forced to close because Congress could not agree on a budget, not that it was a political stunt by President Obama.

*With which statement about closing the national parks do you agree more?*

The national parks were closed by the Obama administration to make the government shutdown as painful as possible for the American public

Because Congress could not agree on a budget, the national parks were forced to close during the government shutdown





# **VIEWS ON FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC LANDS**



# Most feel that the sequester went too far in cuts to funding for national parks.

*As part of the across-the-board federal spending cuts also known as the sequester, federal funding for national parks was cut by \$153 million in 2013. This resulted in reduced hours and services in national parks across the country. What do you think about these funding cuts?*

**Funding cuts to national parks have gone too far**



**Funding cuts to national parks have been about the right amount**



**Funding cuts to national parks have not gone far enough**



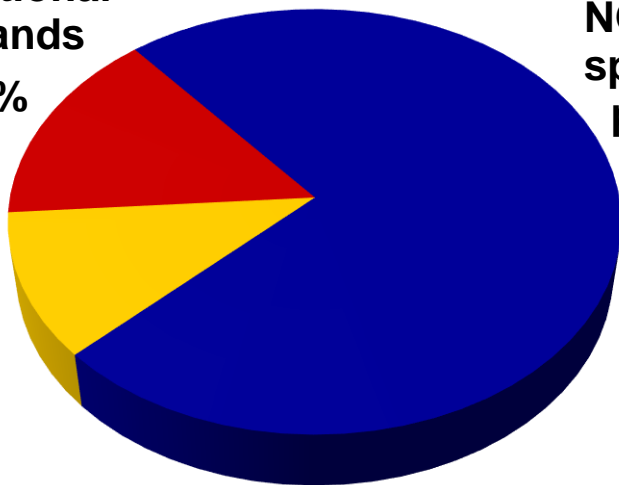
# Voters overwhelmingly oppose further cuts to national parks and other public lands.

*Congress is considering where to cut federal spending in order to reduce the budget deficit. With this in mind, should Congress make additional cuts in the spending that goes to protect and maintain national parks and other public lands?*

**Make additional cuts in spending on national parks/public lands**

15%

**Not sure**  
11%



**NO additional cuts in spending on national parks/public lands**

74%

	<b>NO cuts</b>	<b>Make cuts</b>
Democrats	<b>82%</b>	9%
Independents	75%	15%
Republicans	64%	<b>24%</b>
Northeast	<b>79%</b>	14%
South	71%	17%
Midwest	74%	18%
West	73%	13%

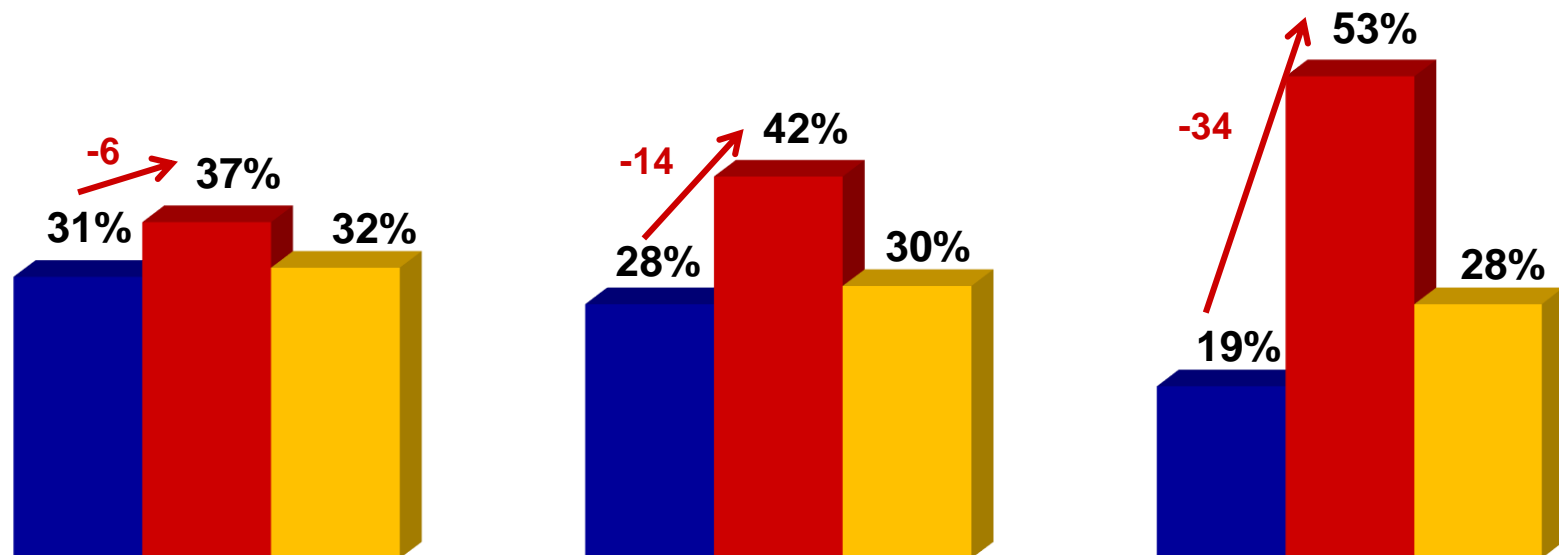
# Voters don't believe either party, especially Republicans in Congress, is doing enough to protect national parks and public lands.

■ Doing enough to protect national parks and public lands for future generations    ■ Not doing enough to protect national parks and public lands for future    ■ Not sure

Barack Obama

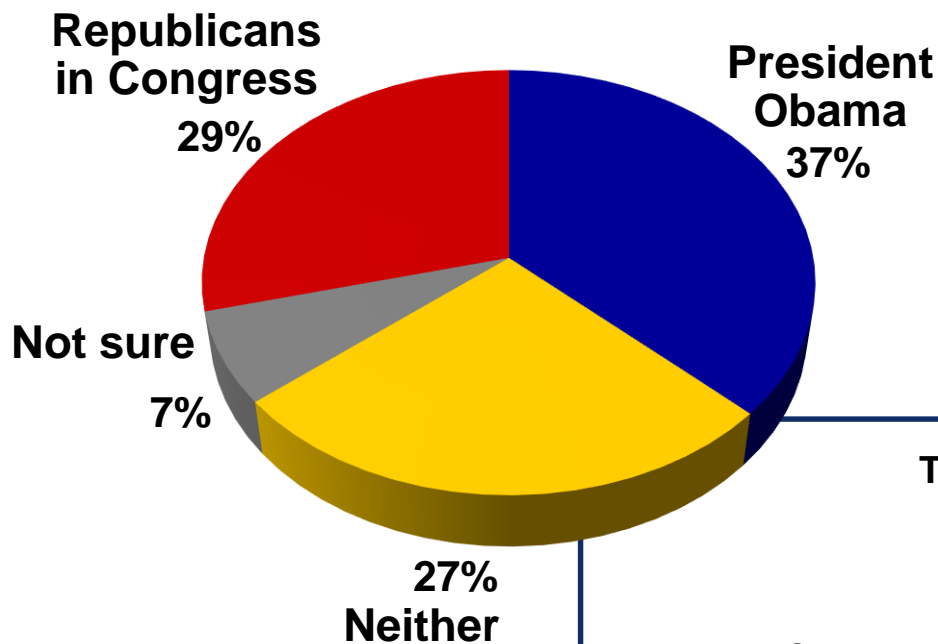
Democrats in Congress

Republicans in Congress



# Obama is more trusted on public lands, but independents trust no one.

*Whom do you trust more to deal with issues involving national parks and other public lands?*



**Trust by Party ID**

	Demo- crats	Inde- pendents	Repub- licans
President Obama	75%	24%	5%
Republicans in Congress	3%	24%	65%
Neither	15%	45%	24%

# The marching order to the Congress is clear: prevent additional cuts to national parks and public lands.

*What should Congress do about these additional automatic spending cuts?*

**Congress should find a way to prevent the additional automatic spending cuts for national parks and other public lands from going into effect**



**Congress should allow the additional automatic spending cuts for national parks and other public lands to go into effect**



By Trust on Issue		
	Trust Obama	Trust GOP Congress
Allow cuts	12%	34%
Prevent cuts	84%	<b>60%</b>



# Preserving the beauty of national parks for future generations is the most compelling reason to protect funding.

*Proportions saying each is a very/fairly convincing reason to protect funding for national parks and public lands*

- 83%** As Americans, we all own our national parks. They are gifts from previous generations and are a **legacy we pass on to our children and grandchildren**. It is our responsibility to protect our parks now so we can guarantee that future generations can enjoy the beauty of our parks, learn about nature, and experience their heritage just like we did. *(70% very convincing)*
- 76%** National parks provide us with some of the most **beautiful, majestic, and awe-inspiring places** on Earth, but funding for our national parks has not been keeping up with what is required to maintain the park system adequately. National parks should be honored, cherished, and cared for, not left to crumble into disrepair. *(60% very convincing)*
- 70%** We need to protect funding for national parks and public lands because continued cuts and **closures hurt small businesses, local communities, and America's tourism economy**. *(52% very convincing)*
- 70%** Our public lands and natural resources are **huge economic engines for the nation**, supplying everything from the energy that powers our economy to the icons that attract tourism and outdoor recreation. But to harness these benefits, we **need to invest the necessary resources** to keep our parks healthy, conserve wildlife, and manage energy and mineral production safely. *(51% very convincing)*





# Arguments about the economic benefits of public lands also make a strong case.

*Proportions saying each is a very/fairly convincing reason to protect funding for national parks and public lands*

- 68%** Our nation's **public lands and waters support a \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy**. Maintaining access to quality places to play outside is critical to businesses, fundamental to recruiting employers, and at the heart of healthy and productive communities. *(48% very convincing)*
- 64%** The **closing of national parks and other public lands showed the importance of these places** both to the people who visit and to the economy of nearby communities. If we continue with deep budget cuts to funding for national parks and other public lands, we will see the forced closing of many parks and public lands and the negative consequences that come with that. *(48% very convincing)*
- 62%** The budget cuts have simply gone too far. We **should be investing in our national parks and public lands**, not closing parks and laying off rangers. *(48% very convincing)*
- 62%** As our population continues to grow, we **need to be expanding opportunities for Americans to get outdoors** by investing in parks and open spaces. *(47% very convincing)*

# BOTTOM LINE: Majorities of voters across parties want to see increased support for new parks and public lands, not cuts to parks' budgets.

“Instead of closing parks and cutting their budgets, Washington should be creating new parks and expanding opportunities for Americans to get outdoors.”

