

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2025

Director Russell Vought
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St. NW
Washington, DC 20503

Secretary Doug Burgum
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Vought and Secretary Burgum,

We write to express deep concern over your administration's proposal to terminate the majority of employees within the National Park Service's (NPS) Chesapeake Bay Office as described in court documents produced by the Department of the Interior as part of the ongoing litigation in *American Federation of Government Employees v. United States Office of Management and Budget*.¹ The NPS Chesapeake Bay Office plays a critical role in fostering stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay through their work to enhance public access and recreation opportunities, support local tourism, and increase environmental and historical education throughout the watershed. Terminating these employees is a direct attack on the decades-long work to preserve the Chesapeake Bay. We urge you to swiftly reverse this decision.

The NPS Chesapeake Bay Office manages and supports sites throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in order to protect the natural, cultural, and historical resources of the region. Most notably, this Office oversees the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (Chesapeake Gateways). Established by the bipartisan Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998 and recently reauthorized by the bipartisan America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization Act of 2024, Chesapeake Gateways is a system of over 150 trails, museums, parks, historic communities and refuges in both urban and rural areas ranging from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia to the northernmost parts of the watershed in New York. This program has helped preserve countless sites throughout the watershed and enable them to be better accessed and engaged with by the public. Local economies have relied on Chesapeake Gateways as it has expanded opportunities for recreation, education, tourism, and business. Recreational opportunities in the watershed now bring in nearly \$14.3 billion in annual revenue and support close to 1 million jobs.²

Through the Chesapeake Gateways program, the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office also facilitates a competitive grant program to support communities within the watershed seeking to promote conservation and public access. Recent grant awards have helped develop educational programming for underserved youth, restore native forests and wetland habitats, establish education centers for tribal communities, and support economic development through tourism. The staff at the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office also provides technical assistance to communities and partner organizations working on projects in line with the goals of Chesapeake Gateways. These employees guide project managers through planning, communications, stewardship, and public access strategies. Partner organizations have increased their contributions to the local economy, improved conservation practices, and better served the public because of this assistance.

This Office is especially important as we prepare to celebrate the United States' 250th anniversary next year. Our nation was founded along the Chesapeake Bay and many sites within the Gateways network tell the story of its native peoples, early explorers, our founders and the country's growth, such as the Captain John Smith National Historic Water Trail, the birthplaces of George Washington and other founding fathers, and the Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail. The NPS Chesapeake Bay Office staff serve a critical role in the

¹ <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cand.457131/gov.uscourts.cand.457131.71.2.pdf>

² <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/pressrelease/chesapeake-bay-program-exceeds-goal-to-open-new-sites-for-the-public-to-access-the-water>

operations of these sites, and the expected increase in tourism in line with the anniversary will require continued levels of support.

Terminating the majority of employees at the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office undermines the critical work required of this Office by law and endangers the ongoing support that this Office provides to the region. Our communities rely on the services these employees provide to the public, and our constituents deserve continued access to the recreational opportunities that they support and manage. We urge you to reverse this decision and are open to working with your administration to further protect, conserve, and restore the Chesapeake Bay.

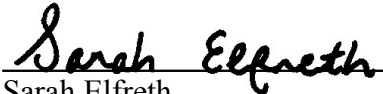
Sincerely,



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



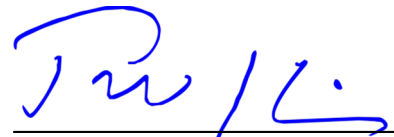
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



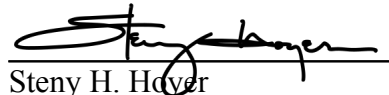
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



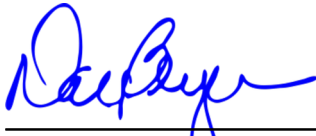
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



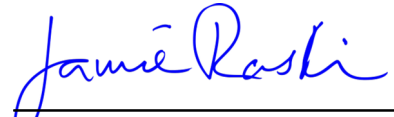
Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



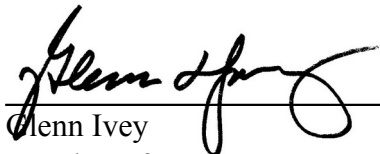
Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



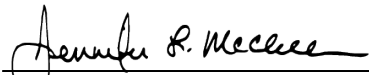
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



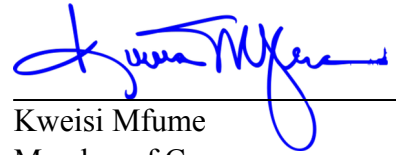
Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



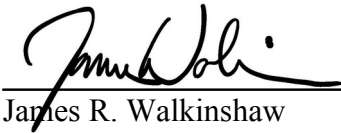
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



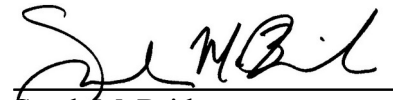
Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



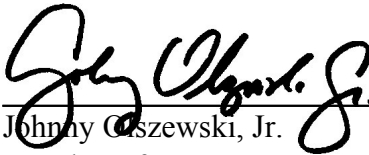
April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



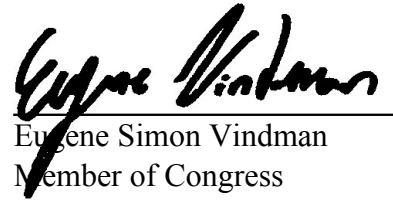
James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



Johnny Ciszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress



Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress