

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 21, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Jon Jarvis
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell and Director Jarvis,

A few months ago, Senator King asked Secretary Jewell in a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing whether National Park passes could be purchased online or through a smart phone application (app). We now write to formally request that the National Park Service (NPS) initiate the process of making it possible to purchase National Park passes online or through an app. Specifically, we urge you to establish a pilot program for the electronic sale of park passes at Acadia National Park, which was recently named “America’s Favorite Place” by viewers of ABC’s Good Morning America.

Today, it is possible to buy almost anything on a smart phone; from home pizza delivery to booking an airline ticket, it can be done on a phone. Millennials – the next generation of park visitors – do just about everything on their phones. Online sales of park passes could help all park visitors to more easily purchase passes to enjoy our National Parks.

Online sales would also allow for infinite customization of passes – a visitor could purchase a pass for any number of people and any number of days. Then, the visitor would be emailed a scannable pass, much like one receives for airline tickets. This pass could be scanned at an entrance station with a ranger standing by to answer questions, hand out maps, and add value to the visitor experience. This could also speed the admission process to our more popular parks.

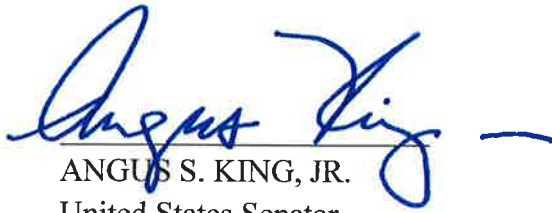
Agencies often cite a lack of resources for not creating online systems. Yet, we believe that there are cost effective, alternative methods for developing online sales of park passes, such as no-cost contracting, where a vendor develops the system and charges a slight premium for online passes in order to recoup costs, that could be employed by NPS.

The crowning jewel of the park system – Acadia National Park in Maine – could greatly increase its revenue, both for its own use and for the Treasury, by online sales of passes. Acadia is a porous park with many entrances; some visitors to the park do not pay an entry fee, even though they would like to do so. This leaves revenue on the table. A pilot program for the online sale of park passes at Acadia would be a great opportunity for NPS to test a user-friendly electronic


system. In our discussions with Acadia park officials and the local chamber of commerce, the idea of online passes has been met very positively.

The centennial anniversary of the National Parks is almost upon us. Let's start moving the Park System into this new century. We look forward to working with you on this initiative.

Sincerely,



ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senator



SUSAN M. COLLINS
United States Senator