



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Senator Serrano Urges Leaders to Restore State Parks Funding

JOSÉ M. SERRANO February 16, 2010

| ISSUE: **STATE PARKS**

Governor David A. Patterson's proposed budget significantly slashes funding for New York State Parks. If the proposed budget is enacted, 40 parks will undergo service reductions, and 91 State Parks and Historic Sites will be forced to close.

Senator José M. Serrano, Chair of the Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, has distributed the sign-on letter below- addressed to legislative leadership- to all members of the New York State Senate. He has garnered bipartisan support in favor of restoring funds for State Parks.

February 8, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We write to express our concern regarding the FY2010-2011 Executive Budget proposal which seeks to reduce this year's total appropriation for the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (State Parks) by nearly \$65 million. The State Parks operating budget

has already been slashed nearly 25% in just the last two years. These previous cuts to State Parks' budget have resulted in service reductions, and any further cuts to their budget will lead to the unprecedented closure of parks throughout the State.

In order to prevent unprecedented statewide park closures, State Parks will need a minimum of \$20 million in additional operating aid than was proposed in the Executive Budget. To be clear, this additional operating aid cannot come at the expense of the \$20 million in capital funding proposed in the Executive Budget and is essential to the safe operation of our parks.

We recognize that we are confronted by challenging fiscal realities, but even in these financially difficult times we cannot risk losing our state's most magnificent treasure—our parks. A small investment in parks will avert the elimination of jobs, recreational activities, educational opportunities and community programs. In fact, a 2009 report found that the State Park system serves as a catalyst for our state's economy by generating \$1.9 billion for private businesses and supporting nearly 20,000 jobs. This means, the state enjoys a significant \$5 return in benefits for every \$1 it invests in its parks.

Furthermore, we must consider the long-term repercussions of park closures— not only on our economy, but also on the environment. It is imperative that we protect and preserve New York's environment; and that we ensure that the viability of our tourism industry remain at the forefront of our budgetary vision. Park closings will exacerbate New York State's economic woes and destroy the environment that has become a vital part of the lives of countless New Yorkers. Consequently, we respectfully request that you restore a minimum of \$20 million in operating aid to State Parks.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

José M. Serrano

New York State Senator

28th District