



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Senator Serrano and Majority Conference Urge Compliance to Maintain Federal Parks Funding

JOSÉ M. SERRANO April 12, 2010

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(Albany, NY)- Senator Jose M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx) and the Senate Majority Conference announced opposition today to the National Parks Service's threat to withhold federal funding as a result of the Governor's proposal to close facilities within the State parks system.

The Majority -- who led the fight against proposed cuts to parks funding, which would have closed dozens of locations -- urged the Governor to work with the federal Administration to determine a plan of action which maintains parks operations and does not endanger federal monies.

"The letter issued by the National Park Service further emphasizes that closures of any of our State Parks should never have been proposed from the start. While we are faced with unprecedented fiscal challenges, the reality is that New York's State Parks are a vital component of its economy," said Serrano, Chair of the Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks & Recreation.

Serrano continued, "By contributing a 5-to-1 return on investment to the State, parks help

generate \$1.9 billion annually in economic activity. In addition, the loss of federal dollars will only add insult to injury. Closures will prolong and deepen the recession the people of our state are already experiencing,”

Under Serrano’s leadership, the Senate’s Budget Resolution restored appropriate funding to the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to prevent closures of State Parks. Similarly, the Assembly’s Budget Resolution made adequate restorations to OPRHP. However, as budget negotiations continue beyond the April 1st deadline, the legislature has thus far only agreed to pass emergency budget extender bills issued by the Governor. The extender bills provide modest funding support for OPRHP. However when OPRHP Commissioner Carol Ash addressed the Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks & Recreation last week, she warned that such extender bills do not provide a sufficient long term funding stream. Consequently, the passage of only extender bills could prevent the opening of 34 State Parks come May.

“While I remain hopeful that we will reach an agreement on a final budget bill very soon, I want to ensure that it is complete with sufficient funding to prevent closures to any State Parks,” said Senator Serrano. “In the interim, I urge the Governor to include appropriate funding for State Parks in any subsequent extender bills— enough funding to provide for a viable summer parks season. We cannot jeopardize the loss of federal funding for State Parks.”

He concluded, “We are willing to work with the National Park Service in order to remain in absolute compliance with the federal requirements for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Federal Lands to Parks programs. If our park system isn’t adequately supported, New Yorkers stand to lose an important factor to their quality of life and to the economic health of the state.”

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