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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025
<https://appropriations.senate.gov>

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August 6, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

As Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, we write to express our concern and to request more information regarding the role the Department of the Interior (DOI) will have in implementing Executive Order (EO) 14416, “Restoring Trust in the Smithsonian Institution.”

EO 14416 directs you to work through the Director of the National Park Service (NPS) in coordination with the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy to install temporary signage along NPS-maintained sidewalks and walkways near the National Museum of American History (Museum) to: 1) inform visitors of the findings of the recent report entitled, “Saving America’s Story: How Ideological Capture at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History Erases Our Heritage” (Report); and 2) notify visitors that “the Museum exhibits should be renovated consistent with the findings in the Report”¹ while directing visitors to “locations and resources for accurate information regarding America’s history.”² The EO also directs you to install temporary exhibits or signage on NPS-maintained sidewalks, walkways, and land that “corrects inaccurate information presented in the Museum.”³

For the past 180 years, the Smithsonian Institution has been committed to sharing objective historical evidence through research and education, not political narratives. The Smithsonian Institution has worked tirelessly to present a comprehensive narrative of our nation’s amazing

¹ Exec. Order No. 14416, “Restoring Trust in the Smithsonian Institution,” July 24, 2026, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/07/restoring-trust-in-the-smithsonian-institution-e061/>.

² Exec. Order No. 14416, 2026.

³ Exec. Order No. 14416, 2026.

history, from its many triumphs to its trials. There is nothing more American than telling our story truthfully.

The Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee has jurisdiction over both the DOI and the Smithsonian Institution and it is our role as Chair and Ranking Member to conduct oversight over the use of taxpayer dollars in areas within our jurisdiction. Accordingly, please answer the following questions:

1. Is there any precedent by which NPS land has been used to communicate conflicting information or messages related to an outside entity's ongoing activities or operations?
2. Is there any precedent by which NPS funding has been used to disseminate conflicting information or messages related to an outside entity's ongoing activities or operations?
3. Where will the signage direct visitors to go to for additional "accurate" information? Who is compiling this information?
4. Will NPS solicit public feedback on this additional information before installing the new signage?
5. Please describe plans for the signage (including a map of where each sign will be placed):
 - a. How many signs will there be and where will the signs be placed?
 - b. What will be the size of each sign? What will each sign be made of? Will these be made in-house at DOI?
 - c. What will be the content of each sign and who is drafting and finalizing the content?
 - d. What is the expected cost per sign?
 - e. Will signs be affixed to existing poles or structures?
 - f. Will new poles or structures be built to support the signs? If so, what is the expected cost?
6. How long does the Department anticipate these "temporary" signs will be in place for?
7. What is the total expected cost of carrying out all activities, including, but not limited to, planning, sign-making, and installation, that you are directed to undertake under EO 14416?
8. Where will the funding come from within DOI/NPS to pay for this directive? How many DOI/NPS staff will be working on this directive?

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior,
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