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February 24, 2010

Hon. David A. Paterson
New York State Governor
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

We write in response to the recommendation by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to close many New York State Parks and to reduce services to many others. Of particular concern to us are the eleven New York State Parks on Long Island affected by these proposals.

The Office of Parks has recommended closing six State Parks in Suffolk County. They include: Brookhaven State Park; Caleb Smith State Park Preserve; Cold Spring Harbor State Park; Nissequogue River State Park; Orient Beach State Park; and Trail View State Park.

An additional five State Parks on Long Island that will suffer service reductions include: Bethpage State Park; Connetquot River State Park; Heckscher State Park; Jones Beach State Park; and Montauk Downs State Park.

Their plan also assumes \$4 million in park and historic site fee increases that will be identified at a later date and the use of \$5 million in funds from the Environmental Protection Fund to finance Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's operations.

As we look back at the history of our State Parks, we find that their creation came when the Great Depression engulfed New York State. Building and maintaining the State Parks provided hundreds of jobs. Inexpensive State Park vacations became a popular means of escape and enjoyment for both the young and old in our communities.

Long Island was gifted with some of the best parks and recreation facilities in the country. Our 20 State Parks and historic sites currently attract nearly 20 million visitors annually. Whether it's swimming, golf, picnics, camping or hiking, our parks are supposed to be a place where taxpayers can escape bad budget news – not be reminded of it.

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We believe that closing New York State Parks is the wrong strategy at the wrong time. In these tough economic times, we should not take away the opportunity for an affordable getaway to our State Parks. To close six State Parks on Long Island will severely affect the quality of life for all of our constituents.

There is no question that we need to reduce state spending, but we should be targeting Medicaid fraud, the bloated state bureaucracy, and reversing the \$13 billion increases in budget spending over the last two years - not closing our parks that promote local tourism.

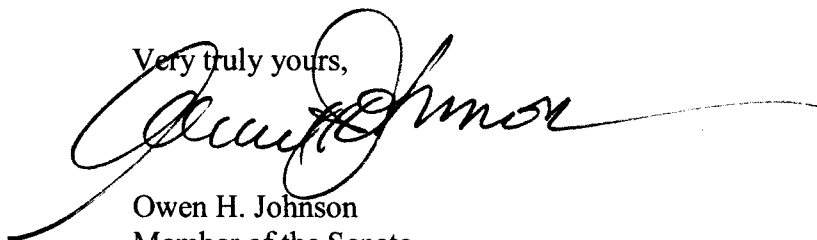
We ask that you fight wasteful spending in New York State so that we can invest in the things that are important to our families and our way of life.

With best personal regards, we remain

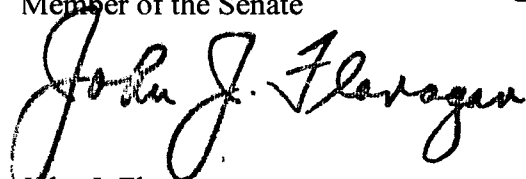
Very truly yours,



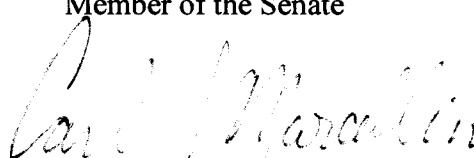
Kenneth P. LaValle
Member of the Senate



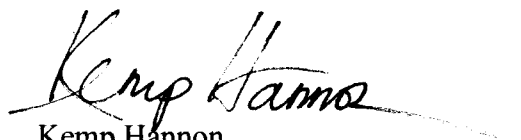
Owen H. Johnson
Member of the Senate



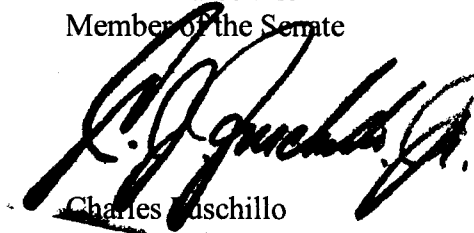
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