

U.S. Congresswoman Emily Randall
HNR Oversight Hearing with Secretary Burgum

05/13/2026

Rep. Randall: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Secretary Burgum for appearing before the committee today. I represent Washington's sixth district, which includes the most popular National Park in our state.

In 2024 Olympic National Park welcomed over 3.7 million visitors, contributing \$380 million to our local economy and supported almost 3,000 jobs — a huge impact. Tourism and natural resources based jobs are the foundation of our community and are critical for my neighbors in the sixth.

However, peak hiking season is just around the corner, and our local partners are worried that they won't have the staff they need to keep trails open and keep hikers safe this summer — let alone be able to empty trash cans and take care of bathroom facilities like this that we've seen on KIRO news lately.

Last year, the Trump administration DOGED 4,000 National Park workers, and you're requesting a 25% cut to the National Park Service in the President's FY 2027 budget, eliminating another 3,000 jobs. For example, Olympic National Park is down to only one permanent staffer on their fisheries team.

12 federally recognized Tribal Nations also reside and thrive on their ancestral lands that are part of my district. And as Secretary of Interior, you manage federal lands, natural resources, National Parks and Wildlife, and you are charged with honoring this country's promises to Tribal Nations and carrying out our trust and treaties responsibility.

Mr. Secretary, you are not meeting the mark. I'm deeply concerned about the state of deferred maintenance across all of our parks, staffing reductions and upholding our commitment to Tribes, and I'm hoping you will commit to working with me to better serve the American people.

Secretary Burgum, you've been very clear — as you cut Park Service staffing and budget that you want to redirect resources from headquarters in Washington, D.C. and regional offices to the field so that visitor experience is maintained. Is that a correct characterization?

Secretary Burgum: Yes.

Rep. Randall: Thank you. I'm surprised by this budget request, because it seems to me that you are more focused on D.C. over roads, trails and buildings in our national parks across the country.

For example, your budget asks for \$10 billion for a new, and I'm quoting here, 'presidential capital stewardship program for priority construction and beautification projects in and around Washington, D.C.'.

At the same time, your budget asks for less than \$3 billion for repairs and maintenance in parks in the rest of the country next year. So that's \$10 billion for new preservation in D.C. and less than \$3 billion for parks and maintenance across the country.

You're proposing that the vast majority of funding for park construction be spent in D.C., at the direction of President Trump, not in our communities. This is wrong. It's misguided.

Here's a photo from one of my neighbors hiking on the North Fork of the Quinault trail in the Olympic National Park. This is a popular trail taken by young families, and is very clearly a safety hazard. There's a backlog of \$300 million in deferred maintenance and repairs needed for Olympic National Park alone.

And we have another photo, an AI image that President Trump posted about a beautification project that he wants done in D.C. This project would drain the reflecting pool at the Lincoln Memorial so the bottom can be repainted or resurfaced in blue instead of white — and you're actually in this image, Secretary Burgum!

Of these two images, which do you think should be the higher priority? Fixing a bridge that is a safety hazard for hikers, or changing the bottom of the reflecting pool?

Secretary Burgum: Well, my answer would be both, and that's why we're encouraging this, this committee and Congress to pass the GAOA...

Rep. Randall: Please don't dodge my simple question, Mr. Burgum. Which is the more urgent maintenance?

Secretary Burgum: I'm not dodging. I'm not dodging. We have deferred maintenance issues all over the country...

Rep. Randall: Yes, we do, and you are prioritizing \$3 billion for those nationwide deferred maintenance projects and \$10 billion for Capital Preservation in D.C. I can tell you that my neighbors...this is my time. Thank you.

Secretary Burgum: You ask me questions, am I not allowed to answer?

Rep. Randall: I asked you a simple question and you decided to go off on a tangent.

Secretary Burgum: Well you answered a question with a false hypothesis.

Rep. Randall: It's my time, Mr. Secretary. Most Americans think that it's much more urgent to improve public safety in the national parks and make sure everyone can safely enjoy the outdoors. But in fact, you find President Trump's vanity projects more important because you waive procurement rules to issue an emergency no bid contract...

Secretary Burgum: False.

Rep. Randall:... worth over \$10 million to repaint the reflecting pool, and I see that my time has expired, so I will end by asking for unanimous consent to enter into the record these two articles from the New York Times, 'Reflecting Pool repairs to cost \$13.1 million, Trump had promised \$1.8 million', and 'Reflecting Pools Repairs Uneven and Behind Schedule'.