

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 12, 2025

The Honorable Douglas J. Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write to express our concerns with the reservation system proposed by Zion National Park for the Visitor Use Management Plan (VUM), which has been in development and strongly opposed by state and local officials. We strongly urge you to reject this restrictive management tool and instead work with state and local officials to address challenges.

Zion holds profound importance to Utah's heritage, identity, and economy. The economic significance of Zion to Utah and to gateway communities cannot be overstated. The proposed reservation system would limit access to the park. After implementing a similar reservation system in 2022, visitor spending surrounding Arches National Park in Grand County dropped by 12.4% initially and an additional 6.5% the following year. According to the National Park Service's most recent visitor spending effects report, Zion generated more than \$676 million in economic impact and supported 10,782 jobs throughout Utah in 2023 alone. Should Zion's gateway communities see similar effects from the reservation system as Grand County, it would equate to an annual loss of almost \$128 million. Zion's accessibility is fundamental to its role in visitor experience and for maintaining local economies to sufficiently serve park visitors.

In 2017, Zion first published three preliminary draft alternatives for its VUM plan. Both action alternatives centered on a restrictive parkwide reservation system, which was resoundingly condemned by state and local leaders and Utah's congressional delegation. Yet nearly a decade later, and despite sustained opposition from state and local officials, we understand Park leadership continues to pursue this unworkable approach. We also understand a draft VUM plan and Environmental Assessment are due to be released sometime this summer. Therefore, we respectfully request that you cancel Zion's VUM plan and allow collaborative solutions that are already underway to take effect.

The State of Utah has consistently demonstrated its commitment to supporting Zion in addressing operational challenges while fulfilling its mission. Currently, numerous state agencies, local governments, and other local stakeholders are working with Zion, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service on the *Zion Region Recreation Management Plan*. This effort is focused on dispersing visitors more efficiently throughout the region, reducing traffic congestion in and around the park, providing regional transit connectivity, and assisting the park with public outreach for major projects, including the scheduled oversized vehicle restrictions on the Zion-Mount Carmel Highway. Additionally, the state legislature has appropriated \$18 million

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

for critical infrastructure improvements specifically designed to address visitor capacity concerns, enhance visitor experiences, and improve public safety. These substantive investments reflect the State's dedication to solving the Park's challenges.

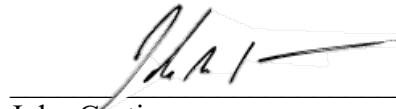
The collaborative partnership between Utah and Zion has been built over decades of mutual respect and shared commitment to public access to this magnificent landscape. We are deeply concerned that imposing a reservation system would damage this productive relationship and undermine the cooperative spirit that has enabled us to address past challenges successfully.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

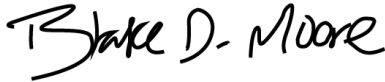
Respectfully,



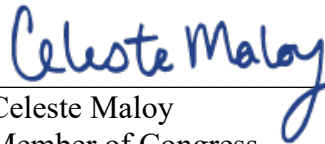
Michael S. Lee
United States Senator



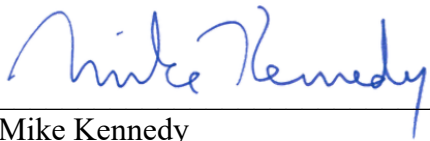
John Curtis
United States Senator



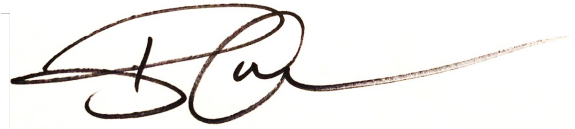
Blake Moore
Member of Congress



Celeste Maloy
Member of Congress



Mike Kennedy
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens
Member of Congress