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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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June 25, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Secretary Burgum:

We write to express deep concerns regarding the Department of the Interior's (DOI or Department) rushed rehabilitation project of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. The American people deserve to know why the rehabilitation project has failed and the corrective actions the Department is taking to address this ongoing issue.

For generations, the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool has served as a historical landmark and one of the most powerful symbols of American democracy. The reflecting pool has been the backdrop to some of our nation's most significant and iconic historical moments—from civil rights demonstrations to presidential commemorations to national celebrations. In April, President Trump announced renovations to the reflecting pool. Since announcing the renovations, the project has been plagued with a number of issues—raising serious questions about project management, contracting practices, quality control, and fiscal responsibility.

Initially, the President said that the project would cost \$1.8 million.<sup>1</sup> However, those costs have significantly ballooned and reportedly now exceed \$14 million.<sup>2</sup> The issues now facing the reflecting pool are not simply maintenance concerns, but failures in project execution and government oversight. Following the award of a no-bid contract and a drastic increase in project costs, the public was assured that the rehabilitation project would restore one of the nation's most visible landmarks. Sadly, that has not happened. Days after the reflecting pool was refilled, large algae blooms have turned the water green, undermining the very purpose of the renovation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David A. Fahrenthold and Luke Broadwater, *Reflecting Pool Repairs to Cost \$13.1 million. Trump Had Promised \$1.8 million*, The New York Times (May. 11, 2026), Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/11/us/politics/reflecting-pool-paint-contract-trump.html>

<sup>2</sup> Rachel Frazin, *Reflecting Pool contract balloons up to \$14.7M*, The Hill (June 18, 2026), Available online: <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/5930934-reflecting-pool-algae-lincoln-memorial/>

<sup>3</sup> Meg Kelly and Maura Judkis, *Reflecting Pool algae bloom is one of the biggest recorded in years after \$14M renovation*, The Washington Post (June 18, 2026), Available online: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2026/06/18/algae-detected-reflecting-pool-higher-levels-than-any-june-past-5-years/>

Shortly after, sections of the newly applied blue coating separated from the bottom and surfacing to the top of the pool. The reflecting pool experienced peeling, cracking, tearing, and delamination of the coating despite the project having been completed only days earlier. Perhaps, most troubling, is that the reflecting pool now will have to be drained again for additional repairs only weeks after its completion.<sup>4</sup> If a project this costly and of this magnitude cannot remain functional for an entire month after its completion, serious questions must be raised regarding the planning, execution, inspection process, and the Department's acceptance of the completed work. Taxpayers deserve a full explanation of how these failures occurred and who will be held accountable for correcting them.

In light of these questions and concerns, we request responses to the following questions by July 9, 2026:

1. Please provide the expected cost of the rehabilitation project. In responding to this question, please explain why the cost of the project has risen from \$1.8 million to the new amount.
2. Please provide an accounting of what funds were used for the rehabilitation project (*e.g.*, Legacy Restoration Fund, Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act fees, annual appropriations, etc.).
3. Please provide a list of all future repairs and who will be responsible for the cost of those repairs.
4. When selecting the project contractor, what factors did the Department consider (*e.g.*, technical expertise, past performance, etc.) and what legal authority did the Department rely on to award a no-bid contract? Will the Department hold the contractor accountable for the defects and failures?
5. Has the Department conducted an independent engineering, architectural, or construction quality review regarding the reported peeling, cracking, and failure of the coating system? If so, please describe in detail those findings.
6. What investigation has the Department conducted into the causes of the severe algae bloom and subsequent water treatment measures?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

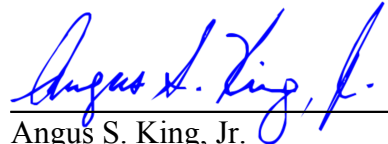
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<sup>4</sup> Sareen Habeshian, *Reflecting Pool to be drained as Trump again blames 'vandals' for recent troubles*, BBC (June 23, 2026), Available online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5yzpjd1njpo>



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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Committee  
on Energy and Natural  
Resources



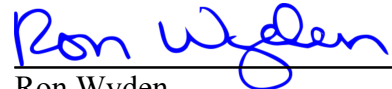
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Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on National  
Parks



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Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



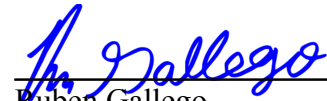
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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



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Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator