

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 8, 2026

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

Ms. Jessica Bowron  
Acting Director  
National Park Service  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Director Bowron,

We write to follow up on our letter from January 26, 2026 that raised serious concerns regarding the Administration's termination of the lease held by the National Links Trust (NLT) for operation of East Potomac Golf Links, Langston Golf Course, and Rock Creek Park Golf Course. More than five months have passed since this letter was sent to you, and we have yet to receive a response. At an April Senate Appropriations hearing, Secretary Burgum acknowledged that he had not seen the letter, but assured Senator Van Hollen that the Department would respond. In the interim, the Administration has continued to advance plans for these courses, including Secretary Burgum's announcement on social media of a renovation design by Fazio Design for East Potomac Golf Links, without any disclosure to the public or to Congress of the scope, cost, or basis on which that engagement was awarded. The absence of any reply is itself troubling, and recent developments have made our concerns considerably more urgent.

On May 8, 2026, the Department of the Interior announced an agreement under which the National Links Trust will receive a new long-term lease for Langston Golf Course and Rock Creek Park Golf, while continuing to operate East Potomac Golf Links until the National Park Service is prepared to begin a restoration project there. Public statements accompanying the agreement referenced future restoration and redevelopment concepts at the courses, including expanded facilities and community programming, as well as continued partnerships with organizations including First Tee of Greater Washington, D.C., the Western Golf Association, and the Evans Scholars Foundation. While we welcome commitments to keep the courses open, accessible, and affordable, the announcement raises important questions about the scope of any future work contemplated for East Potomac and the extent to which plans have already been developed. Secretary Burgum publicized the agreement on social media, posting that he was excited to unveil a renovation design from Fazio Design. However, the only detail provided was a low-resolution image of the proposed course, leaving the public and Congress entirely in the dark about the scope of the redevelopment, including to what extent redevelopment will ensure continued public access to the waterfront, address existing infrastructure issues on Hains Point, and protect important artifacts such as the historic cherry trees on the White Course – the oldest grove of Japanese cherry trees in D.C..

Those concerns were further heightened by President Trump's unannounced visit to East Potomac Golf Links on June 28, 2026, with Secretary Burgum, representatives of Fazio Design, and White House staff. Photos captured during that visit show President Trump holding designs with a substantially increased project scope as compared to the initial design shared by Secretary Burgum. This new golf course design appears to encompass the entire peninsula stretching down to the southern end of Hains Point. The design also appears to jeopardize some of East Potomac

Park's most popular features including the Hains Point bicycle trail, the miniature golf course, and historic cherry trees. Following that visit, the President announced on social media that work on East Potomac would begin on September 1, 2026, described the course as severely neglected, and stated that the redesigned course could host major professional golf tournaments. These photos and statements seem to illustrate the Administration's plans for East Potomac Park, yet the Department has still not provided Congress or the public with basic details about the scope of the project, the funding source, the expected period of closure or disruption, the effect on current users, or how such an accelerated timeline can be reconciled with applicable environmental, historic-preservation, procurement, and public-engagement requirements. A public commitment to preserve access is welcome, but it is not a substitute for a transparent plan that ensures East Potomac Park remains a genuinely affordable municipal golf course and public parkland for residents of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

The environmental and public health concerns stemming from the Administration's decision to dump dirt and debris from the White House East Wing project on the White Course at East Potomac, raised in our original letter, have also grown more serious. A recent analysis of the debris provided by Jacobs Engineering Group detected many toxic compounds in the dirt pile including heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and pesticides. Several of these compounds, including arsenic and lead, were detected at levels that could pose a risk to human health. The public deserves a full account of what has been deposited there and what risks, if any, it poses.

The questions posed in the original letter remain unanswered. We respectfully request responses to all of the following:

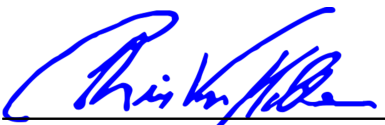
1. How will the Department ensure that course fees and access at East Potomac Golf Links remain genuinely affordable for the communities that have depended on these public courses for nearly a century? Does the Department anticipate that course fees will increase or that the annual number of publicly available rounds of golf will decrease, as compared to when the course was managed by National Links Trust? If so, please provide estimates of the expected changes in cost and availability.
2. How will the Department ensure continued access for the bikers, walkers, runners, and recreational fishermen that utilize the popular waterfront Hains Point Loop Trail at East Potomac Park?
3. What assessment has been made of potential health risks to golfers, course employees, youth program participants, and the surrounding environment at East Potomac Park, including the Potomac River?
4. What plans are in place to remediate hazardous substances identified in the debris pile, what is the expected timeline for remediation actions, and who will bear the cost of these cleanup efforts?
5. How does the Department intend to ensure compliance with all applicable federal environmental and public health laws, including any requirements for environmental assessment?

6. Does the Department intend to rebuild the seawall before starting broader redevelopment at East Potomac Golf Links? How does the Department intend to fund the full scope of redevelopment, including seawall reconstruction? Will this be financed through federal appropriations, private donations, or some combination thereof, and has Congress been consulted about any use of taxpayer funds?
7. What steps is the Department taking to protect the historic cherry trees on the White Course at East Potomac Golf Links, reportedly among the last surviving trees from the original 1910 gift from Japan, from any planned redevelopment or restoration work? How will the Department protect cherry trees along the waterfront at East Potomac Park?
8. East Potomac Park serves a wide range of users beyond golfers, including runners, cyclists, tennis players, fishermen, and families who rely on its open spaces and waterfront access. What assurances can the Department provide that the planned redevelopment will preserve access to these public spaces?

The municipal golf courses of Washington, D.C. are public assets with deep historical, recreational, and community value. Decisions affecting their future, and the health and safety of those who use them, must be guided by law, transparency, and fidelity to the public trust. The Administration's failure to respond to the questions posed in the January letter, combined with the significant new developments outlined above, compels us to seek answers with greater urgency.

We look forward to a response by July 20, 2026.

Sincerely,



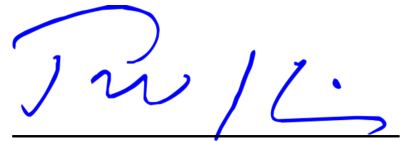
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator