

Parks, Jobs and Equity Act

Local parks have always been critical infrastructure, providing communities with jobs, economic development, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The coronavirus pandemic has given local parks a whole new meaning for Americans, becoming vital spaces for fresh air, exercise, and respite from anxiety. Unfortunately, while the benefits of parks are more obvious than ever before, already 56 percent of park agencies have seen budget cuts this year¹, and 71 percent of local governments foresee significant future cuts². These cuts will mean lost jobs and economic activity. And reduced park services and postponed upgrades are already hurting communities at a time when equitable access to the outdoors has never been more important.

That's why Representatives Barragán, Turner, and Neguse, supported by a coalition of 200+ national, regional, and local park and recreation organizations, are working to provide \$500 million for local parks to create jobs, improve local economies, and address park inequity. We must ensure that we integrate local parks into our recovery rather than allow them to become collateral damage.

Policy Summary: This historic, one-time investment will put local parks to work as communities recover - from dual health and economic crises. The Parks, Jobs and Equity Act (PJEA) will create good jobs, spur economic development and expand outdoor recreation, all while addressing historic inequities in park access. Specifically, by creating a \$500 million formula state grant program the Parks, Jobs and Equity Act will:

- **Create over 8,000 new jobs.** The PJEA program will also preserve 100,000 at-risk local seasonal jobs through investments in recreation services – like park programming – in addition to creating new jobs and job training opportunities building parks.
- **Add \$1.37 billion to local economies.** These federally funded grants will greatly assist state and local governments facing serious budgetary challenges and revitalize local economies hit hardest by COVID-19. In 2017 alone, local parks in the U.S. generated more than \$166 billion in economic activity, and the PJEA program will protect this growing sector from pandemic-related losses³.
- **Fund over 1,000 new or upgraded local parks.** These parks will help the one-in-three Americans, including 28 million kids, without close-to-home access to nature during the COVID-19 pandemic⁴. By investing in new or redeveloped local parks, playgrounds, trails and green spaces in communities where they're needed most, the PJEA program is helping to provide critical health infrastructure.

The PJEA program builds on the success of the existing bipartisan Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program (ORLP), which provides funding for parks in under-resourced neighborhoods across the country. Unlike ORLP, this emergency program is a formula grant with state and local control to make sure investments are quickly executed and responsive to local priorities and communities hardest hit by COVID-19. The program also serves more small towns by increasing grant eligibility from ORLP's minimum population of 50,000 to a broader minimum of 30,000. Further, the program does not require a local match – allowing cities and towns suffering from declining revenues to make strategic, priority investments.

For additional information please contact Matt Dernoga (Matt.Dernoga@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Barragán's office or Maggie Ward (Maggie.Ward@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Turner's office.

¹ National Recreation and Parks Association, "Parks Snapshot: May 6-8 Survey Results"

<https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-may-6-may-8-survey-results/>, 2020.

² National League of Cities, "What COVID-19 Means for City Finances"

https://covid19.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/What-Covid-19-Means-For-City-Finances_Report-Final.pdf, 2020.

³ George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis and National Recreation and Parks Association, "The Economic Impact of Local Parks" <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-summary-2020.pdf>, 2020.

⁴ Trust for Public Land, "Parks on the clock: why we believe in the 10-minute walk" <https://www.tpl.org/blog/why-the-10-minute-walk>, 2016.