
By: **Senators Hogan, Astle, Currie, DeGrange, Garagiola, Middleton, and Munson**

Introduced and read first time: March 6, 2006

Assigned to: Rules

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A Senate Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Natural Resources - State Parks and Forests - Preservation and Funding**

3 FOR the purpose of urging the Governor to direct the Secretary of Natural Resources

4 to take steps to ensure that State parks and forests are kept accessible and are

5 maintained, to promote certain existing and beneficial programs, and to

6 continue to preserve, protect, and fund the State parks and forests.

7 WHEREAS, Maryland's State parks provide access to ecological and biological

8 diversity, are significant scenic, historical, and cultural assets, and are a fundamental

9 element of our State's natural resources; and

10 WHEREAS, State parks are part of Maryland's heritage, provide an essential

11 public service, satisfy our need to connect with the natural world, give us a sense of

12 harmony, and help us better understand the world around us; and

13 WHEREAS, Maryland's parks are a treasure to the State and careful

14 stewardship of this public trust is critical if future generations are to continue to

15 enjoy them; and

16 WHEREAS, Our State parks and forests provide an educational resource that is

17 over 260,000 acres in size and provide lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens of

18 our State; and

19 WHEREAS, Maryland State parks are home to a great variety of fish and

20 wildlife; and through proper stewardship of these species and their habitats, provide

21 hunters and anglers countless opportunities to experience and continue the rich

22 traditions of hunting, fishing and wildlife watching; and

23 WHEREAS, Parks and forests provide a natural setting and inspiration for

24 exercise and activity that improve a person's physical fitness, and therefore help with

25 the treatment and prevention of a variety of adult and childhood diseases; and

26 WHEREAS, Our State parks play an important role in many sectors of

27 Maryland's economy, including tourism industries, recreational activity, retail sectors,

28 and employment, to the extent that the economic benefit is tenfold - for every \$1

29 budgeted for a park, \$10 goes back into the State's economy; and

1 WHEREAS, During 2006, the centennial of the Maryland Park and Forest
2 Services, more than 12,000,000 visitors are expected to enjoy the natural beauty and
3 resources of our parks; and

4 WHEREAS, In the current budget, park services are being insufficiently funded
5 and provided, in that only six employees are dedicated entirely to interpretive
6 services as naturalists and historians, a 66% reduction since 2003, and in 2006, 91
7 rangers were transferred to the Natural Resources Police without replacements for all
8 of them, and any replacements that are being hired are being funded solely through
9 Special Fund revenues, not through General Fund appropriations, which means that
10 the money comes out of the park visitor's pocket rather than being funded as a public
11 service; and

12 WHEREAS, Programs by the Maryland Park Service that provide cultural,
13 educational, historical, and recreational resources have been downsized and
14 compromised, such as the Junior Ranger program, which will soon be a completely
15 self-guided program rather than having park rangers as role models and mentors as
16 originally intended; and

17 WHEREAS, Compared to other nearby states, Maryland has the highest day
18 use and camping service charges, which prevent many people from enjoying this
19 public resource; and

20 WHEREAS, The Department of Natural Resources has unilaterally changed the
21 objective for State parks and now wants to make the parks self-sufficient, generating
22 their own revenues through use charges, rather than providing the funds necessary to
23 maintain these public lands and public services for all residents of our State to enjoy;
24 now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the
26 Governor is urged to direct the Secretary of Natural Resources to take steps to ensure
27 that Maryland's State parks and forests are kept accessible to all who want to enjoy
28 them, to maintain and promote existing and beneficial programs that are important
29 historical, educational, and cultural resources in the State, and to continue to
30 preserve, protect, and fund State parks and forests fairly, consistently, and in
31 perpetuity as a vital public service; and be it further

32 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
33 Legislative Services to the Honorable Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor of Maryland;
34 the Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Senate of Maryland; the
35 Honorable Michael E. Busch, Speaker of the House of Delegates; and the Honorable
36 C. Ronald Franks, Secretary of Natural Resources.