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

Introduced and read first time: March 6, 2006

Assigned to: Rules

Re-referred to: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs, March 8, 2006

Committee Report: Favorable

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 24, 2006

RESOLUTION NO. _____

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

1 WHEREAS, Parks and forests provide a natural setting and inspiration for
2 exercise and activity that improve a person's physical fitness, and therefore help with
3 the treatment and prevention of a variety of adult and childhood diseases; and

4 WHEREAS, Our State parks play an important role in many sectors of
5 Maryland's economy, including tourism industries, recreational activity, retail sectors,
6 and employment, to the extent that the economic benefit is tenfold - for every \$1
7 budgeted for a park, \$10 goes back into the State's economy; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

39 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
40 Legislative Services to the Honorable Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor of Maryland;
41 the Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Senate of Maryland; the

- 1 Honorable Michael E. Busch, Speaker of the House of Delegates; and the Honorable
- 2 C. Ronald Franks, Secretary of Natural Resources.