

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2013

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

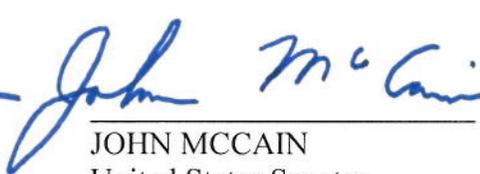
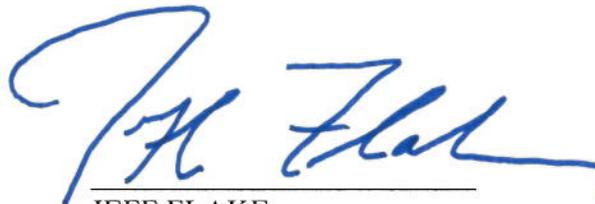
It is our understanding that local communities and private entities in Arizona have offered to donate non-federal funds sufficient to open the Grand Canyon National Park. In addition, it has been reported that the National Park Service (“NPS”) has refused to work with them, indicating that the donor’s actions are irrelevant.

As we understand it, federal statutes extend broad discretionary authority for the Secretary to accept donated funds for purposes of operating the national park system. For example, during the 1995 government shutdown, then-Secretary Babbitt used this authority to open portions of the Grand Canyon National Park with a combination of funds donated by private entities and the State of Arizona. Similar authority was also used just last year, when the Department of the Interior (the “Department”) accepted a \$7.5 million private donation to refurbish the Washington Monument.

We are certain that you share our hope that the current government shutdown is resolved as soon as possible. In the meantime, however, we fail to understand why the Department and the NPS would dismiss the efforts of Arizonans trying to proactively address this situation. We write to request your immediate attention to this issue and to be provided your understanding of the existing authority the NPS has to work with private non-federal donors, as well as an explanation as to why the Department and the NPS are apparently unwilling to work cooperatively with those in Arizona who are trying to keep open one of the crown jewels of the national park system.

We appreciate your prompt consideration of this issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



JEFF FLAKE
United States Senator

JOHN MCCAIN
United States Senator