

Senator Kyrsten Sinema
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Senator Martha McSally
404 Russell Senate Office
Building
Washington, DC 20510

June 8, 2020

Dear Senator Sinema and Senator McSally:

As spiritual leaders in Arizona, we see our communities in need of healing, and the vital role God's creation plays as a balm for wounds inflicted by the pandemic, systemic racism, and economic distress.

The coronavirus pandemic has led to the untimely death of approximately 1,000 Arizonans, with a particularly severe impact among Diné people. We are acutely feeling the civil unrest sweeping our country regarding racism against Black people in our policing and criminal justice systems. Our communities, including religious congregations, are feeling profound economic distress from the pandemic.

In a time when it is difficult to collectively grieve, and it could be dangerous to embrace a loved one, we are finding solace in the embrace of God's creation. Yet, God's creation is, too, in desperate need of our tending and care.

Now, the US Senate is considering passing the Great American Outdoors Act, a vital piece of legislation that we desperately need to help heal God's creation and our communities. This legislation will permanently finance the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the primary mechanism supporting local and state parks. It will also fix the National Park maintenance backlog. The Grand Canyon alone requires nearly \$330 million in maintenance work.

Since the coronavirus pandemic hit, Congress has come to understand that we can, and must, pass significant legislation if we are to be resilient in this difficult time. The Great American Outdoors Act will create more than 16.8 million jobs nationwide, while also improving access to public lands for our communities. Because it supports local community recreation, a fully funded LWCF is also uniquely positioned to improve equity for communities of color to access the desperately needed healing power of public lands. Beloved places such as South Mountain Park, Cortez Park, Sahuaro Ranch Park, White Tank Mountain Regional Park, and Veterans Memorial Park have benefited from LWCF, and this must continue.

In hope,

Rev. Doug Bland
Arizona Interfaith Power and Light
Tempe, AZ

Rev. Al Beasley
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Scottsdale, AZ

Chaplain Tom Chapman
All Saints Episcopal Church

Phoenix, AZ

Deacon Joan Crawford
Guardian Angels, Ecumenical Catholic Communion
Tempe, AZ

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Regional Minister, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona
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Rev. Kelley Dick
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Tucson, AZ

Rev. Derrick D. Elliott
Desert Heritage Church, United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Mesa, AZ

Billie K. Fidlin
President, Arizona Faith Network
Phoenix, AZ

Rev. Jan Olav Flaaten
Retired Executive Director, Arizona Ecumenical Council
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Rev. Rock R. Fremont Jr.
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Rev. Rebekah Krevens
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Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ
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Desert Palm United Church of Christ
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