

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 28, 2022

The Honorable Deb Haaland  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We write with serious concern about the Department of the Interior's apparent decision to stop providing police escorts to American veterans traveling to our nation's capital as part of the Honor Flight Network.

The Honor Flight Network has brought hundreds of thousands of veterans to our nation's capital since 2005. As part of these trips, the Honor Flight Network organizes buses to bring veterans to the National Mall, where they can visit memorials for the wars in which they fought, reflect on the sacrifices they and their comrades made in those campaigns, and remember those who never came home. To say that the Honor Flight Network is performing a national service is an understatement. For thousands of American veterans, these trips are a once in a lifetime opportunity for honor, reflection, and remembrance that simply cannot be replaced.

The Department of the Interior has historically played an important role in making these trips possible by providing U.S. Park Police escorts for buses carrying Honor Flight veterans to the National Mall. These escorts are important because of many of these veterans are no longer able to walk long distances on their own. Being able to drive and park close to the memorials they are visiting is therefore essential. Escorts also help to ensure Honor Flight trips are safe and run smoothly without logistical challenges or schedule delays that can impact the trip's experience for our veterans.

Yet it appears the Department of the Interior has changed its policy about providing these vehicular escorts for Honor Flight trips. For example, in response to an inquiry from Rep. Bill Posey (FL), the Chief of the U.S. Park Police admitted that there had been a "suspension" of these services in part due to the Department's "policy on escorts." In addition, we have recently been made aware that Missouri-based Honor Flights have been denied these vehicular services, even though they have received these same services in years past.

Such a policy change is wholly unacceptable and deserves further explanation. It needlessly creates new challenges for Honor Flight groups, including veterans from our home state of Missouri.

Our nation's veterans represent the best of us. It's critical that the government do its part to honor their sacrifices by making these trips run as smoothly as possible. With this in mind, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to resume U.S. Park Police escorts for veterans traveling to our

nation's capital with the Honor Flight Network. We ask further for your responses to the following questions no later than Tuesday, May 3, 2022:

1. How many police escorts has the Department of the Interior provided annually for Honor Flight Network trips to Washington, DC? Please provide all relevant data annualized for the years 2005 to 2022.
2. When did the Department of the Interior formally decide to suspend police escorts for Honor Flight trips to Washington, D.C., and why was this decision made?
3. Why does the Department now claim its "policy on escorts" prohibits vehicular services to the Honor Flight Network, when these same services were provided in years past?
4. Were the President of the United States, Secretary of Defense, or Secretary of Veterans Affairs informed of any decision by the Department of the Interior to end police escorts for Honor Flight trips, and if so, when were they informed, and did they support that decision?
5. Will you commit to provide police escorts for all future Honor Flight trips to our nation's capital? If so, when will those escorts become available and who should the Honor Flight Network contact in order to coordinate trip escorts?

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We await your timely response.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley  
US Senator



Roy Blunt  
US Senator