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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
December 16, 2003

Director Fran Mainella
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Mainella:

I am writing concerning the National Park Service's decision to place U.S. Park Police Chief Teresa C. Chambers on leave.

Before coming to the U.S. Park Police in 2002, Chief Chambers was Chief of Police in Durham, North Carolina, in my congressional district. I was very impressed by her leadership in Durham and believe she is an extremely competent and thoughtful public servant.

I was therefore surprised to learn of the disciplinary action against Chief Chambers and of the reasons for it. According to statements by Park Service officials, Chief Chambers has been placed on leave for making public comments about ongoing budget discussions and for lobbying. These alleged violations of agency rules are based on Chief Chambers' responses to direct questions from the media about budget and staffing shortfalls.

In light of the nature of the remarks, it appears that the Administration is trying to kill the messenger, or at the very least to minimize the existence of staffing shortfalls and their potential security impact. As a member of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, this is of great concern to me.

First, I would appreciate any information you could provide about the impact that round-the-clock patrols of our national monuments have had on the availability of Park Police to carry out other aspects of their law enforcement mission.

Secondly, while I do not wish to interfere in a personnel matter under the Administration's purview, I am concerned about the handling of this situation and believe it sends the wrong signal to federal employees. I respectfully request that you give this matter your personal attention to ensure that Chief Chambers, for whom I have great personal and professional respect, is treated with the utmost fairness.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Price". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DAVID PRICE
Member of Congress