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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
January 21, 2004

The Honorable Gale Norton
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

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

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. By penalizing Chief Chambers for her responses to direct questions from the media, 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.

In December, I wrote to Director Mainella to ask that she provide information 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. I have yet to hear back from her and would appreciate your looking into the status of this request.

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 stylized and cursive.

DAVID PRICE
Member of Congress

DP:sh