

# PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FEBRUARY 19, 2010

DATE

CONTACT

Bryan Faehner, National Parks Conservation Association, 202-419-3700  
Bill Wade, Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, 520.615.9417  
John Waterman, Park Ranger Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police, 610.823.2907  
Scot McElveen, Association of National Park Rangers, 423.286.8644

STATEMENT

## **New Law to Allow Loaded Guns in National Parks Puts Park Visitors, Wildlife, and America's Heritage at Risk**

**Statement by Bill Wade, Chair, Executive Council, Coalition of National Park Service Retirees:**

“This law is a very bad idea. It is not in the best interests of the visitors to national parks, the resources to be protected in national parks, nor the employees in national parks. Opportunistic shooting at wildlife and historic resources, such as petroglyphs, will increase. Employees, especially law enforcement rangers, will be more at risk. And visitors will not only be more at risk, but will now see national parks as places where they need to be more suspicious and wary of others carrying guns, rather than safe and at peace in the solitude and sanctuary that parks have always provided. It is a sad chapter in the history of America's premier heritage area system.”

**Statement by John Waterman, President, U.S. Park Rangers Lodge, Fraternal Order of Police:**

“The Ranger Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police has opposed this ill-considered law from the beginning. The new law goes beyond concealed carry to include all guns anytime. The chances of an inexperienced visitor who has not seen a bear or buffalo wandering through a campground, gets frightened and takes out the now readily available firearm and shoots blindly at an animal or a person in a misguided effort to "protect themselves" from a perceived threat is now increased. Allowing untrained and unlicensed people carrying guns in National Parks is an invitation to disaster. It puts the safety of the public and rangers at increased risk and virtually invites the desecration of our natural and historic treasures. The previous Reagan era gun rules were designed to curb poaching and they worked. Commercial and opportunistic poaching decreased with the prohibition on open armed carry of firearms in National Parks. What was once a straight forward, easy to understand regulation has now been changed to a law that encompasses a menagerie of state regulations. The law now allows individual states to dictate what occurs on Federal Land that belongs to all Americans and not just the citizens of that particular state. This law threatens the very nature of a family-friendly National Park. We will continue to work to change this law.”



**National Parks Conservation Association®**

*Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®*

1300 19th Street NW • Suite 300 • Washington, DC 20036

202.223.NPCA(6722) • Fax 202.659.0650 • npca@npca.org • www.npca.org

**Statement by Scot McElveen, President, Association of National Park Rangers:**

“In this two-year discussion, many have argued that a change in firearms laws will have either no effect or minimal effect on park wildlife and resources. We that work and live in national parks across the country know first-hand the difficulty of gathering enough evidence to successfully prosecute a poacher. We know, first-hand, all the difficulties of successfully prosecuting poachers in federal court, and the deterrent effective that successfully prosecuted poaching cases can have. We think it naïve to believe that purposeful poachers will not take every advantage of this change in the law and make every attempt to camouflage themselves to avoid detection. The new law also makes the decision for opportunistic poachers to act easier. And, the result of less deterrence means more wildlife are killed and injured, and less viewable for park visitors to enjoy.”

“History tells us that wildlife populations can be decimated by firearms. The American bison once numbering as many as 200 million and the passenger pigeon once numbering in the billions are the most striking examples. It can happen again. ANPR is disappointed in the change in this law and hopes that one day the American public will trust those that live and work in parks with the best management judgment for the National Park System. As stated in the recent Ken Burns’ series about national parks, in the early years when wildlife populations were disappearing in Yellowstone National Park, park visitors were prohibited from taking their firearms into the park and wildlife populations rebounded quickly. The equation is still that simple today.”

**Statement by Bryan Faehner, Associate Director for Park Uses, National Parks Conservation Association:**

“We remain astonished and disappointed by votes cast by many elected members of Congress to allow people to openly carry rifles, shotguns, and semi-automatic weapons in national parks unless otherwise forbidden by the state or local law. The new law guts balanced and reasonable regulations last updated during the Reagan Administration that called for visitors to places like Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Acadia, and Gettysburg to keep their firearms unloaded and put away. These common sense regulations have helped keep our national parks safe, family-friendly destinations for many years.”

“The new law places an even greater burden on the already understaffed National Park Service. Congress must take appropriate action to provide the agency with sufficient resources to effectively enforce the new law and the management challenges it creates. As the National Park Service works to educate the public about the new law, NPCA will closely monitor the steps being taken to ensure the safety of park visitors, and protection of our American heritage and wildlife for future generations.”

###





[www.npca.org](http://www.npca.org)