

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2006

Secretary Dirk Kempthorne  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington DC 20240

Re: New Jersey's Great Falls National Park Study

Dear Secretary Kempthorne,

As Americans reflect on the Fourth of July and the celebration of our political independence, proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence and won in the Revolutionary War, we believe it is also important to recognize the economic independence America later achieved. The Congress in 2001 directed the Secretary of the Interior to study whether New Jersey's Great Falls National Historic District—the site Alexander Hamilton selected to implement his vision of America's economic independence—should be made a part of the National Park System. As Interior Department officials work to complete this study later in the summer, we urge you to do everything within your power to assist in the creation of a Great Falls National Historical Park in Paterson, New Jersey.

An editor of the *National Review* calls New Jersey's Great Falls National Historic District “a seminal American site: the Bethlehem of Capitalism, ground zero of modern America.” Fifteen miles west of New York City, the Great Falls was the second largest waterfall in colonial America. No other natural wonder in America has played such an important role in our nation's historic quest for freedom and prosperity.

After the Revolutionary War, America remained heavily dependent on England for virtually every kind of manufactured product, from clothing to military supplies. Alexander Hamilton, America's first Secretary of the Treasury, recognized that America could never be independent of foreign oppressors so long as it remained dependent on foreign manufactures. Hamilton conceived and implemented a plan to harness the force of New Jersey's Great Falls to power the new industries that would secure our economic independence.

Alexander Hamilton told Congress and the American people that at the Great Falls he would begin implementation of his ambitious strategy to transform a rural agrarian society dependent upon slavery into a modern economy based on freedom. True to Hamilton's vision, Paterson became a great manufacturing city, producing the Colt revolver, the first submarine, the aircraft engine for the first trans-Atlantic flight, more locomotives than any city in the nation, and more silk than any city in the world.

New Jersey's Great Falls is the only National Historic District that includes both a National Natural Resource and a National Historic Landmark. In a special Bicentennial speech in Paterson with the spectacular natural beauty of the Great Falls in the background, President Gerald R. Ford said, "We can see the Great Falls as a symbol of the industrial might which helps to make America the most powerful nation in the world."

The preeminent Hamilton biographers, an esteemed former Smithsonian Institution curator, the former chief of the National Park Service Historic American Engineering Record, and distinguished professors at Yale, Princeton, Harvard, NYU, Brown and other universities have filed letters with the National Park Service strongly recommending a National Historical Park for the Great Falls Historic District. Scholars have concluded that Pierre L'Enfant's innovative water power system in Paterson—and many factories built later—constitute the finest remaining collection of engineering and architectural structures representing each stage of America's progress from a weak agrarian society to a leader in the global economy.

For millions of Americans, our nation's history and the Founding Fathers seem distant and far removed. Many Americans who now feel little connection to our National Parks and the Founding Fathers will find much greater meaning within Paterson's authenticity and cultural diversity.

A National Park unit at the Great Falls will not be costly for the Federal government because the City of Paterson owns the key properties, buildings and valuable historical documents. The State of New Jersey will provide at least \$10 million in financial assistance, and private donors will make significant contributions to a Paterson National Park interpreting Alexander Hamilton's vision of economic independence and freedom.

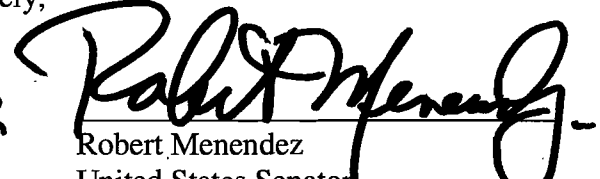
America's excessive reliance on imported oil reminds us of the continuing importance of economic independence. Ron Chernow, author of the latest biography of Alexander Hamilton, writes: "It has always saddened me that we do so much better a job in our schools in instructing students in the rich political history of our country than in the no less stirring saga of our economic development. A National Park Service site in Paterson would prove an especially vivid and dramatic way of educating our citizenry in America's economic history."


Over two hundred years ago, at the Great Falls in New Jersey, Alexander Hamilton began to implement his vision of an economy based not on slavery but on freedom, producing goods not only for domestic consumption but also for international trade, focusing not on one industry but on diverse manufactures, and promoting not discrimination but opportunities. Even though some of us have already written to support the Great Falls National Historical Park, we join together today as the representatives of all of New Jersey citizens as we celebrate Independence Day to ask you to take this opportunity to


recognize that our nation's economic independence began in Paterson. Now is the perfect time to create a national historical park at the Great Falls to interpret America's rich economic history.

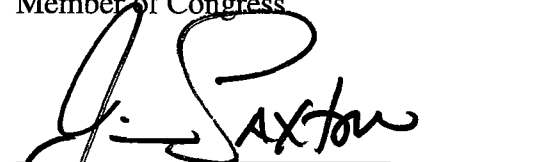
Sincerely,

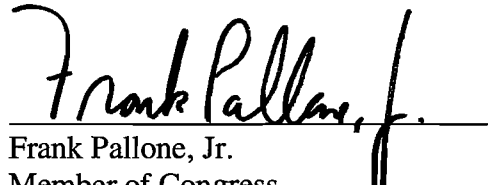
  
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United States Senator


  
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

  
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

  
Christopher H. Smith  
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Member of Congress

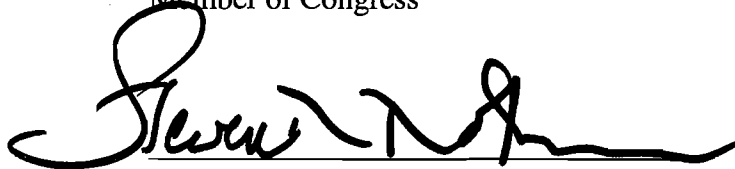
  
Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress


  
Donald M. Payne  
Member of Congress

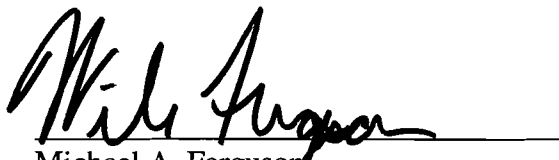
  
Robert E. Andrews  
Member of Congress

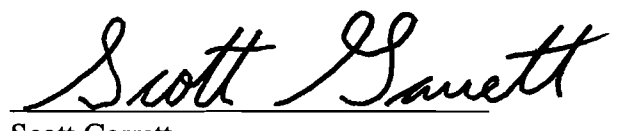
  
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