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October 19, 2011

The Honorable Mark Udall, Chairman  
National Parks Subcommittee

The Honorable Rand Paul, Ranking Member  
National Parks Subcommittee  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Udall and Mr. Paul:

On behalf of the more than 145,000 citizens of Hampton, Virginia, I have the high honor and privilege to submit this letter urging the United States Congress to pass legislation enacting the establishment of a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe in the City of Hampton. As Mayor of the City of Hampton, I can assure you that establishing a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe has the full support of our City Council and is one of our cities' top priorities.

The City of Hampton has a long-standing appreciation and respect for Fort Monroe's history, and we know that preserving and interpreting that history to the American public is of national importance. It is this history, which dates back to the founding of our country and includes General Benjamin Butler's contraband slave declaration which transformed the Civil War into a war for freedom, that is the reason why this place should be a National Park. Further, the site's beauty and its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay and saltwater marshlands create unparalleled opportunities for Hampton Roads' 1.7 million residents, as well as visitors from across this country, to enjoy and become active in Great American Outdoors, offers further justification.

Today, however, I want to discuss another reason that we support the creation of a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe: It will bring significant economic revitalization to our city, boosting tourism and creating spinoff jobs in the private section.

As a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision to cease the United States Army mission at Fort Monroe and close the installation, Hampton's economy has declined by 7 percent. We have seen a loss of 5,524 jobs and a decline in population of 3,404. As we continue to weather extremely challenging economic conditions, the closure of Fort Monroe compounds the difficulties in working to provide core services to our citizens.

*"Oldest Continuous English-Speaking Settlement in America - 1610"*

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Since the BRAC announcement, many of our citizens – as well as national organizations – rallied and began the process of working together to establish a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe. For example, the local Citizens for a National Park at Fort Monroe group has engaged local, state and federal officials to garner support. Grassroots efforts like these have brought us to this important juncture, where Senator Mark Warner and Senator Jim Webb, along with Representative Scott Rigell, have introduced legislation that create a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe. Along our journey, we have had unwavering bipartisan support from citizens in Hampton, Hampton Roads, and across the country, as well as at all levels of local, state and federal government.

The goal of establishing a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe has built unprecedented support in our city and unified citizens of all ages, race and walks of life from across Hampton Roads and the Commonwealth of Virginia. At public hearings held by the National Park Service, more than 1,000 citizens lined up to speak unanimously in support of creating a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe. Many traveled long distances from other states across America to join in uniting with others in this important activity. Thousands more have sent in emails and letters.

The key issue in this country is creating jobs and revitalizing the economy, and we know that establishing a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe is a key step in accomplishing that mission. A recent study released on the Historic Triangle of Jamestown, Colonial Williamsburg, and Yorktown here in the Commonwealth of Virginia indicated that over 363,000 visitors spent an estimated \$327 million, which supported 1,184 local private sector jobs as well as an 81-member National Park Service staff. Because of Fort Monroe's proximity to the historic triangle, many believe that creating a National Park Service Unit will significantly add to the numbers of tourists visiting the region, thus bringing more spending and jobs.

In addition to creating jobs, we also know it is critical in a BRAC to bring back economic vitality through the highest and best reuse of the properties being vacated. The combination of establishing a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe with building rehabilitation will also generate new jobs and stimulate the economy. Dollar for dollar, historic preservation is one of the highest job-generating economic development options available. For example, we know that 3.4 more jobs are created for each \$1 million spent on rehabilitation than on new construction. Further, each \$1 million spent on rehabilitation adds \$53,500 more to household income in Virginia than the equivalent amount spent on new construction. As a National Historic Landmark, Fort Monroe must be sustained and maintained to ensure it remains a vibrant part of America's history. Working together in partnership, a National Park presence will boost the state's effort to attract educational and high-tech resources to create a campus on the historic base to ensure its future.

Throughout America's history, we have been faced with many challenges and opportunities that continue to set a course for future generations. Establishment of a National Park Service Unit at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, will ensure all Americans have the opportunity to visit and learn about the many untold stories that played a critical part in shaping our nation and the importance of preserving our past so future generations can build a brighter future. It will ensure that a rare, unspoiled beach remain accessible as an active park within an urban area. And it will spur the economic vitality that will grow jobs and investment for Hampton and the surrounding areas.

Sincerely,



Molly Joseph Ward  
Mayor