

**JOINT RESOLUTION REGARDING FEDERAL FUNDS FOR
NATIONAL PARK REOPENING**

2023 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Ken Ivory

Senate Sponsor: David P. Hinkins

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This resolution addresses funds used by the state of Utah to keep national parks, national monuments, and national recreation areas within Utah open.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ recognizes the threat created by the large national debt;
- ▶ resolves to forgive a federal debt owed to the state of Utah for state money used in lieu of federal funds to keep Utah's national parks, national monuments, and national recreation areas open during a 2013 partial government shutdown; and
- ▶ asks the federal government to apply the amount owed to the national debt.

Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

WHEREAS, the inability of Congress to pass a budget led to a partial shutdown of the federal government from October 1 through 16, 2013;

WHEREAS, during the federal government shutdown, the National Park Service (Service) closed all 401 national parks, including Utah's eight national parks, seven national monuments, and other national recreation areas;



28 WHEREAS, as a result of the shutdown, Utah experienced a significant decline in the
29 Service's visitation levels, resulting in an approximately \$17,000,000 decline in Service-related
30 visitor spending within gateway communities that depend on tourism revenue;

31 WHEREAS, to forestall further severe impacts to Utah's tourism industry and the
32 communities and citizens that depend on this important industry, the state entered into an
33 agreement with the Service to reopen and temporarily operate Utah's parks, monuments, and
34 recreation areas, provided that Utah contribute funds to the Service to enable the Service's
35 employees to reopen and manage the parks, monuments, and recreation areas;

36 WHEREAS, the Legislature held an emergency special session in October 2013 and
37 passed S.B. 2001, National Park Funding, appropriating \$8,661,800 to the federal government
38 for the purpose of reopening and operating national parks, national monuments, and national
39 recreation areas within the state during the federal budget shutdown;

40 WHEREAS, at the end of fiscal year 2014, the unused portion of the Legislature's
41 appropriation lapsed back to the state, resulting in a net state expenditure of \$999,432;

42 WHEREAS, S.B 2001 directed the governor and the Division of State Parks and
43 Recreation to urge Utah's federal delegation to introduce legislation to secure the
44 reimbursement of funds Utah paid to reopen our national parks, national monuments, and
45 national recreation areas;

46 WHEREAS, 2016 General Session H.C.R. 11, Concurrent Resolution Encouraging the
47 Repayment of Funds Used to Keep National Parks, Monuments, and Recreation Areas Open,
48 also urged the state's congressional delegation to secure full repayment of the outstanding
49 \$999,432 that Utah paid to the federal government to keep national parks, national monuments,
50 and national recreation areas open;

51 WHEREAS, to date, the federal government has not repaid the \$999,432 to the state;

52 WHEREAS, in the years since the 2013 shutdown, the nation's federal debt has
53 ballooned from \$16.4 trillion to over \$31.5 trillion, increasing at a rate of nearly \$2 trillion per
54 year;

55 WHEREAS, notable recent events triggered large spikes in the federal debt, including
56 the Great Recession and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic;

57 WHEREAS, the United States Treasury reports that from fiscal year 2019 through
58 fiscal year 2021, federal spending increased by approximately 50%, driven largely by massive

59 spending in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;

60 WHEREAS, at the end of fiscal year 2021, the portion of the federal debt held by the
61 public was about the same size as the country's economy, a 33% increase from fiscal year 2019,
62 according to the Government Accountability Office;

63 WHEREAS, without changes to fiscal policy, the Government Accountability Office
64 estimates that the portion of the federal debt held by the public could reach 217% of the size of
65 the country's economy by 2050;

66 WHEREAS, the debt ceiling is the legal limit set by Congress on how much the United
67 States Treasury can borrow, including to pay debts the United States already owes;

68 WHEREAS, since World War I, the debt ceiling has been raised dozens of times;

69 WHEREAS, on January 19, 2023, the United States reached the current debt ceiling;

70 WHEREAS, the debt ceiling must be raised in order to prevent the United States from
71 defaulting on its debt; however, continuing to raise the debt ceiling provides additional funding
72 for deficit spending by increasing the money supply and has resulted in accelerating inflation
73 and increasing interest rates;

74 WHEREAS, the federal government's budget deficit for calendar year 2022 was \$1.4
75 trillion, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget;

76 WHEREAS, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget further reports that the
77 interest costs on the federal debt are expected to reach nearly \$1 trillion in 2029, continuing to
78 crowd out all other federal spending;

79 WHEREAS, an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office found that by 2025 the
80 annual interest payments on the federal debt will exceed annual defense spending, as interest
81 payments grow from \$325 billion in 2018 to a projected \$724 billion in 2025, while defense
82 spending only grows from \$622 billion to a projected \$706 billion over the same period;

83 WHEREAS, according to the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, the state of Utah
84 relies on the federal government for 25% of its budget on average; and

85 WHEREAS, Benjamin Franklin wisely counseled, "Think what you do when you run in
86 debt, you give to another power over your liberty":

87 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah
88 recognizes the persistent and growing threat posed by the nation's large debt.

89 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature urges Congress and the United

90 States Treasury to apply the \$999,432 owed to the state of Utah by the federal government to
91 reduce the national debt.

92 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this joint resolution be sent to the
93 President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of
94 Representatives, and to the members of Utah's federal delegation.