

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 25, 2015

The Honorable Jonathan Jarvis  
Director  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Jarvis:

We are writing with concern over the implementation of Fort Pulaski National Monument Lease Authorization Act (PL 112-69) and the resulting lease negotiations between the National Park Service (NPS) and the Savannah Pilots Association.

As you may know, Savannah River pilots began operating from Cockspur Island as early as 1768 and the Savannah Pilots Association, founded in 1864, has operated from the island since 1940 under special use permits. Congress acted at the request of the National Park Service in PL 112-69 to shift this relationship to a 10-year lease agreement. At the time of consideration, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that rental proceeds under the bill would be less than \$25,000<sup>1</sup>.

In testimony regarding PL 112-69, NPS Associate Director Stephen Whitesell indicated the Department of the Interior supported the legislation because its Solicitor's Office believed, "the association's use of this land should be based on more certain legal authority than the special use permitting process."<sup>2</sup> In addition, Associate Director Whitesell noted the Savannah Bar Pilots have operated, "with virtually no impact on the park resources, on the visitor experience, or on the park operations."<sup>3</sup>

It has come to our attention that, in the course of negotiations, NPS has asserted a fair market value for not more than 30000 square feet to be leased to the Savannah Pilots Association at \$165,000 annually with a 3 to 4 percent Consumer Price Index adjustment each year. This is well above the intent of Congress as exhibited by the CBO estimate and nearly ten times the currently agreed upon annual rental fee of \$18,000. It is our understanding, that in 2013, an appraisal performed by the National Park Service's Office of Valuation Services arrived at a fair market value of \$180,000 per year rental. After the Pilots requested that NPS reconsider the terms of the proposed lease, the OVS did a reconciliation review in 2014. This showed a \$165,000 annual rental, subject to certain offsets for maintenance and

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<sup>1</sup> See House Report 112-298 – Fort Pulaski National Monument Lease Authorization Act (enclosure)

<sup>2</sup> See Senate Report 112-059 – Fort Pulaski National Monument Lease Authorization Act (enclosure)

<sup>3</sup> See Senate Report 112-059

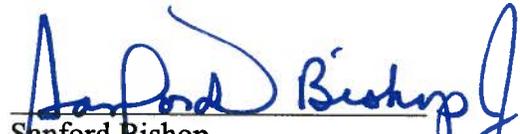
repair of the facilities. By what legitimate means did the NPS reach \$165,000 annual fee as fair market value? In addition, by what means did NPS determine a 3 to 4 percent annual CPI adjustment would constitute fair market value?

In addition to being unfounded, the proposed annual lease fee could prove prohibitive to the Savannah Bar Pilots Association's continued use of the facilities. As pilotage services are required by law, moving the facilities could lead to longer transit times for vessels, increase safety risks in foul weather, delays in ship movement and greater fuel usage for pilots as well as vessels waiting to call on the Port of Savannah. The resulting environmental and economic harm would significantly increase costs and could threaten growth at the Port of Savannah just as the Federal government embarks on the construction phase of the nearly \$700 million Savannah Harbor Expansion Project.

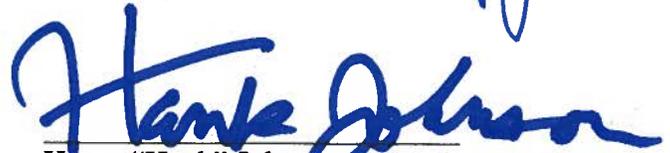
We request that you reconsider the proposed annual lease fee and CPI adjustment to reflect a more realistic assessment of fair market value and work in earnest with the Savannah Pilots Association to equitably resolve these negotiations.

Sincerely,

  
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter  
Member of Congress

  
Sanford Bishop  
Member of Congress

  
Lynn Westmoreland  
Member of Congress

  
Henry "Hank" Johnson  
Member of Congress

  
Tom Price, M.D.  
Member of Congress

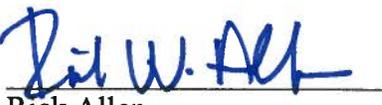
  
Tom Graves  
Member of Congress

  
Rob Woodall  
Member of Congress

  
Austin Scott  
Member of Congress

  
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Doug Collins  
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Jody Hice  
Member of Congress

  
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Rick Allen  
Member of Congress

  
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Burt L. Linder  
Member of Congress