

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 28, 2007

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Considering the significant environmental and economic costs associated with building the North Shore Road—or the so-called “Road to Nowhere” through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park—we ask that you begin immediately to work with us to provide a cash settlement to the citizens of Swain County, North Carolina, rather than further constructing the road.

We recommend these three steps:

First, within the next 90 days, the National Park Service's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should endorse a cash settlement to Swain County instead of any further construction on the North Shore Road.

Second, upon completion of the EIS, the Administration should support legislation that will be introduced in Congress to reprogram the funds remaining from those originally appropriated for the EIS, currently about \$6 million, and give those funds to Swain County as the first installment of the settlement.

Third, in January 2008, as a part of its fiscal year 2009 budget request to Congress, the Administration should include in its budget the next installment of the full cash settlement to Swain County. This funding should come from outside the National Park Service budget in the form of a special request.

The United States made a commitment to Swain County in 1943, when it flooded a highway in connection with the creation of the Fontana Dam, to build a new road through what had become the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, held in 1946 that there is no legal obligation to satisfy that commitment by building another road. A cash settlement instead of a road is precisely the kind of “common sense adjustment” that the Supreme Court envisioned.

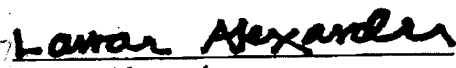
A road through the Park would damage the largest and most pristine wilderness area in the eastern United States. Such a road would cost at least \$600 million, more than

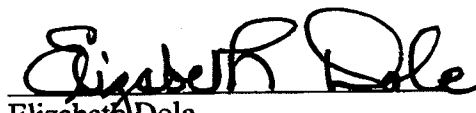
75 times the annual roads budget of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In addition, a good highway now exists outside the Park between Bryson City and Fontana.

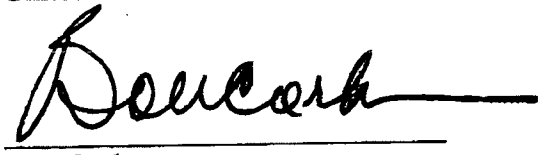
This sort of settlement has been recommended by the elected Swain County Commission and the governors of North Carolina and Tennessee, and is supported by the undersigned members of the North Carolina and Tennessee congressional delegations.


After over 60 years of controversy, it is time to bring this matter to a close. The solution we are endorsing will protect America's most visited national park, save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, and fulfill a promise to the citizens of Swain County, North Carolina.

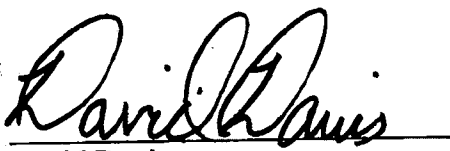
Sincerely,

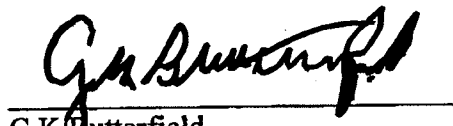

Lamar Alexander
United States Senator

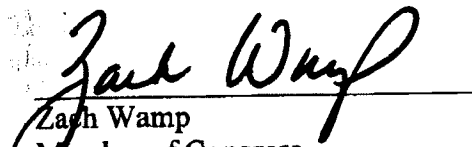

Elizabeth Dole
United States Senator

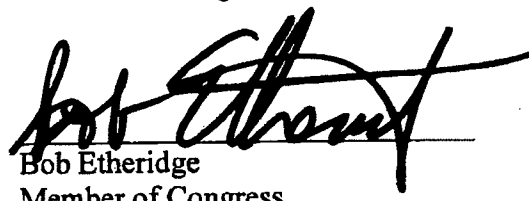

Bob Corker
United States Senator

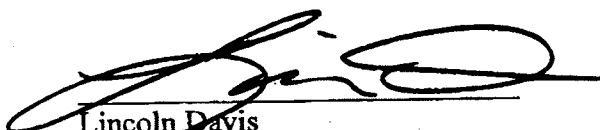

Heath Shuler
Member of Congress

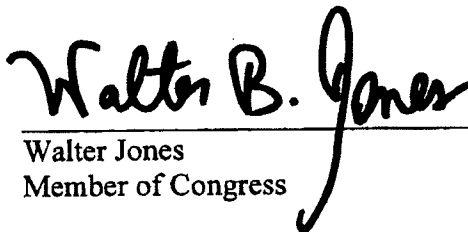

David Davis
Member of Congress


G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress


Zach Wamp
Member of Congress


Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress


Lincoln Davis
Member of Congress


Walter Jones
Member of Congress



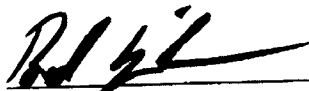
Bart Gordon
Member of Congress



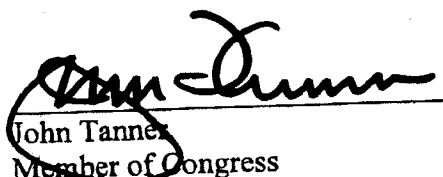
Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress



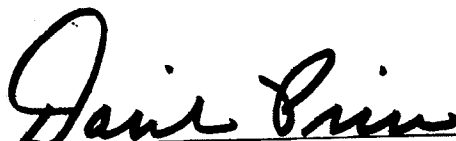
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress



Brad Miller
Member of Congress



John Tanner
Member of Congress



David Price
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Mary Bomar
Director, National Park Service