

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of Interior
U.S. Department of Interior
Washington, DC 20242

Ms. Jessica Bowron
Acting Director of the National Park Service
National Park Service
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum and Acting Director Bowron:

We write to express serious concerns regarding recent public reporting that the Administration has terminated the lease held by the National Links Trust (NLT) for operation of the municipal golf courses East Potomac Golf Links, Langston Golf Course, and Rock Creek Park Golf Course in Washington, D.C.

In 2020, National Links Trust was awarded a 50-year lease by the National Park Service to operate Washington D.C.'s three municipal golf courses, and to manage their refurbishment. On December 30, 2025, the Interior Department reportedly issued a letter terminating the lease, reportedly, for failure to complete required capital improvements and to provide a satisfactory plan to cure alleged defaults under the lease.¹

According to reporting in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*, the National Park Service (NPS) may not have adhered to the legally required notification and consultation processes prior to taking steps that could materially affect NLT's lease and operations.² Pursuant to Section 17.1 of the Lease Agreement between the National Park Service and the National Links Trust (NPS Lease # NCR-3060-19-001) governing these three golf courses, the NPS (the Lessor) must first issue a written notice that identifies specific violations of the agreement and affords NLT (the Lessee) at least 45 calendar days to cure non-monetary defaults. . If remediation requires more than 45 days, the lease expressly provides that termination cannot occur as long as the lessee begins corrective actions within the 45-day period and thereafter diligently pursues such efforts to completion.³ National Links Trust was given none of these details in the notice of default issued to them October 29, 2025, by the National Park Service, as required by the lease agreement.⁴

Over the five years NLT has managed DC's municipal courses, it has made over \$8.5 million in capital improvements to the courses, each of which had fallen into disrepair under previous management, due to years of deferred maintenance. NLT also initiated the first of three major course renovation projects, beginning with Rock Creek Park Golf Course. The renovation project at Rock Creek, one of the nation's oldest public courses and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, included the construction of a new maintenance facility, clubhouse, driving range, and putting course, along with a comprehensive renovation of the course itself, led by renowned golf course architects Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner.⁵ This project has now been halted, following the

¹ Rick Maese, "Future of D.C. Golf Courses Uncertain as Trump Administration Terminates Lease," *The Washington Post*, (December 31, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2025/12/31/trump-dc-golf-courses-lease/>.

² Meridith McGraw, "Trump's Next Renovation Target: D.C.'s Golf Courses," *The Wall Street Journal*, (December 12, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trump-golf-dc-renovation-0536865a>.

³ Rick Maese, "Dirt from Trump's Ballroom Project Was Trucked to a D.C. Golf Course. Why?," *The Washington Post*, (October 31, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2025/10/31/golf-course-east-wing-dirt-trump/>.

⁴ Rick Maese, "Lawmakers Criticize Trump's Bid to Take Over D.C. Golf Courses," *The Washington Post*, (December 18, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2025/12/18/trump-dc-golf-courses-national-links-trust-lease/>.

⁵ Todd Kelly, "National Links Trust Served Notice of Default by Trump Administration," *Golfweek*, (December 15, 2025), <https://golfweek.usatoday.com/story/sports/golf/courses/2025/12/15/national-links-trust-served-notice-of-default-trump-administration-washington-public-golf/87764741007/>.

termination of NLT's lease. NLT's broader plan envisioned sequential renovations of Langston Golf Course and East Potomac Golf Links that would preserve each course's historic nature while maintaining public access and affordability, a hallmark of these courses, which have served communities in Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Maryland for nearly a century.

We are further troubled by public reporting that dirt and construction debris from the demolition and renovation of the White House East Wing have been deposited on the 9-hole, White Course at East Potomac Golf Links.⁶ Reporting has raised concerns about the nature of this material, the lack of public disclosure regarding its contents, and the absence of transparency surrounding any testing conducted for hazardous substances. These reports raise serious environmental and public health concerns.⁷ East Potomac Golf Links is a heavily used public facility located along the Potomac River. The White Course in particular serves junior golfers, seniors, beginners, and community programs.

National Links Trust has worked in close partnership with the National Park Service to rehabilitate historically underinvested public assets, expand youth and community programming, preserve historic course design, and keep golf affordable and accessible.

Before the Department of the Interior or the National Park Service takes any action that would invalidate, suspend, or terminate NLT's lease, we respectfully request clear answers to the following questions:

1. What specific statutory or contractual violation is being relied upon to justify potential action against NLT?
2. What notice, consultation, and cure provisions—if any—were triggered under the lease?
3. Why were Members of Congress and the District of Columbia not formally notified prior to reports of impending action?
4. What materials were deposited on the White Course at East Potomac Golf Links, and from which construction activities did they originate?
5. Was any hazardous materials testing conducted prior to or after deposition of this material? If so, by whom, using what standards, and with what results?
6. Why have testing results, if conducted, not been made publicly available?
7. What assessment has been made of potential risks to golfers, course employees, youth participants, and the surrounding environment?
8. What remediation plans exist if hazardous substances are identified?
9. How does the Department intend to ensure compliance with federal environmental and public health laws?

The municipal golf courses of Washington, D.C. are public assets with deep historical, recreational, and community value. Decisions affecting their future—and the health and safety of the public—must be guided by law, transparency, and respect for long-standing partnerships. We look forward to your prompt response and stand ready to work with the Department to ensure these matters are handled responsibly and in the public interest.

⁶ Alan Bastable, "Why is the White House Carting Dirt to a Golf Course? It's a D.C. Mystery," Golf.com, (October 28, 2025), <https://golf.com/news/white-house-carting-dirt-golf-course-potomac/>.

⁷ Rick Maese, "Dirt from Trump's Ballroom Project Was Trucked to a D.C. Golf Course. Why?," *The Washington Post*, (October 31, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2025/10/31/golf-course-east-wing-dirt-trump/>.

Sincerely,

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Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator