

Talking Points and Guidance for Western National Parks Staff

Please use the talking points provided here when a visitor, customer, or event attendee approaches you with potentially sensitive topics. These talking points are intended to help you safely provide helpful information while redirecting or de-escalating political conversations.

Your safety is our first priority. If a situation escalates, please contact park police or local law enforcement, as well as your supervisor or the event lead.

Please direct all media inquiries to the Marketing and Communications department at marketing@wnp.org.

If anyone wishes to leave us feedback or ask for more information, you can direct them to contact us through our website at <https://wnp.org/contact-us/>.

General Political Comments

WNP's policy:

Please do not advocate, lobby, or conduct political activity during WNP work time or with the appearance of acting as a representative of WNP. (#HR209)

Here are some questions that park visitors or others might ask:

“What do you think/what can you tell us about interpretive signage being taken down at parks?”

“Isn't it awful what the ____ party is doing to our national parks?”

“Can you believe _____ was (re)/elected President of this country?”

“Do you think the outcome of the elections will affect the national parks?”

“Isn't it horrible how the _____ administration has _____? Has that affected WNP?”

Here are two responses. You might choose one, or you might decide to use both!

Response 1: Short, clear, and friendly

“Our policy is not to comment on political issues. I am happy to talk about the [park/our partner parks] and [how to have an amazing park experience/how your purchases support parks!]”

Response 2: Longer and more informative

We are a nonprofit partner of the National Park Service. We are not funded by the federal government, and we do not provide funds directly to the federal government's general budget. We are a separate, private, and nonpartisan organization with a mission to help ensure parks are increasingly valued, experienced, and loved. Since 1938, we've provided more than \$176 million in aid to national parks for special programs, educational materials, research, and more.

Interpretive Signage Comments/Government Shutdown/Staff Shortages

While we wouldn't share our opinions on whether or not a political decision such as removal of signs or a government shutdown will happen, we can still provide accurate and helpful information about WNP to park visitors!

Will/has interpretive signage been removed by the government?

"Our policy is not to comment on political issues. I am happy to talk about the [park/our partner parks] and [how to have an amazing park experience/how your purchases support parks!]"

Will a shutdown occur? How will parks be affected?

"We don't know if a shutdown will happen. If it does, the parks may be affected, and WNP will post updates on our website, social media channel, and with in-store signage. The National Park Service website at NPS.gov will have the most up-to-date information."

Are the parks going to close eventually? [If a shutdown occurs, but parks remain open]

"The National Park Service is part of the federal government, and we don't know if parks will eventually be affected. If a park's visitor center is closed, the WNP park store will also be closed. You'll still be able to shop, donate, and support parks online at wnp.org and The National Parks Store in Tucson, Arizona."

"WNP will post updates about the WNP operational impacts of government shutdown on our website, social media channel, and with in-store signage."

How long will parks stay closed? [If a shutdown occurs and parks close]

"The National Park Service is part of the federal government, and we don't know how long parks may be affected. WNP will post operational updates on our website, social media channel, and with in-store signage."

How have the layoffs affected parks?

We are an independently funded nonprofit partner of the National Park Service that partners with more than 70 parks. We recommend visiting the individual park pages on nps.gov for the most updated information. Each park may be affected differently.

Supportive Messaging

"You can help WNP continue to provide vital support to parks by shopping online or at The National Parks Store in Tucson, Arizona, donating, or becoming a Park Protector member."

"It's more important now than ever to support parks through organizations like WNP. We are a private organization that funds programs, research, visitor experiences, and much more at 70+ national parks throughout the West."