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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

I am writing to raise serious concerns about the so-called “White House Peace Vigil” in Lafayette Square which sits on federal land that belongs to all Americans, not just the ones who decided to set up a permanent encampment across from the White House.

Let me say this as clearly as possible: I will defend the First Amendment to my last breath. It is the most important amendment in our Constitution. Even if I strongly disagree with many of the wrong and distasteful messages advocated for by this protest, Americans have every right to protest their government. But they do not have the right to hijack a national park and turn it into a 24/7 eyesore.

**Let me be clear: nothing in the Constitution guarantees the right to erect permanent structures and occupy public land day after day, year after year, in a manner that creates public safety hazards, degrades the appearance of one of our most iconic parks, and burdens both the District and the National Park Service. This isn’t “free speech”. This is a failure of enforcement.**

And the Supreme Court agrees. In *Clark v. Community for Creative Non-Violence*, the Court upheld regulations prohibiting overnight structures in Lafayette Square, affirming that the government has a substantial interest in protecting public lands from misuse, even when expressive conduct is involved.

As such, I’m calling on your Department to do the following:

1. Immediately initiate a full compliance review of the White House Peace Vigil to determine whether its structures and continuous occupation violate 36 C.F.R. § 7.96(g), including prohibitions on camping, living accommodations, and unattended installations.
2. Assess and publicly report the vigil’s long-term impact on:
  1. Public access to Lafayette Square;
  2. Aesthetic and historical degradation of the site;

3. Park Service resources and personnel;
4. The fair and consistent application of federal demonstration rules to all groups, regardless of message.
3. If violations are confirmed, take swift enforcement action to bring the site into full compliance.
4. Submit formal recommendations to Congress identifying any needed changes to Park Service regulations that would prevent indefinite encampments and restore enforceable limits on demonstrations in high-profile federal spaces.

No group should be above the law, and the continued allowance of this permanent occupation sends the wrong message to law-abiding Americans. This isn't about stopping protest. It's about upholding the rule of law, preserving one of America's most iconic public spaces, and ending a double standard that's made a mockery of both.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response and to seeing our public parks treated with the respect they deserve.

Sincerely,



Jefferson Van Drew  
Member of Congress