

COMMUNITY PARKS REVITALIZATION ACT

NRPA POLICY POSITION

- ★ Co-sponsor legislation introduced by Rep. Sires (D-NJ) H.R. 2424, the Community Parks Revitalization Act and support the introduction of companion legislation in the Senate, which provides matching grants to help revitalize local metropolitan communities and creates an innovative federal financing mechanism for park and recreation infrastructure.

Background

Recognizing the importance of public park and recreation opportunities to larger urban renewal and community development efforts, Congress established the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR) to provide matching grants to localities in economically distressed communities. Over the course of more than two decades, UPARR provided \$272 million for nearly 1,500 projects in 380 localities. Throughout the country, this enabled neighborhoods to restore facilities that had fallen into disrepair encouraged innovative recreational programming and delivery of services and supported programs that provided constructive alternatives to at-risk youth. Unfortunately, UPARR has not been funded since FY2002 and, in its current form, has limitations that must be revised and updated in order to best meet the demands of today's metropolitan communities.

The Community Parks Revitalization Act (H.R. 2424)

The Community Parks Revitalization Act looks to build upon the success of UPARR and would provide matching, federal grants for much needed park and recreation infrastructure. Specifically, H.R. 2424 would authorize the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to:

- ★ Administer grants to assist localities in rebuilding, remodeling, expanding, or developing existing or new parks, recreational areas and facilities
- ★ Provide matching grants for innovative programming, with an emphasis on at-risk youth, returning veterans and military families
- ★ Create a federal program (PIFIA) that provides competitive loans, loan guarantees and lines of credit for construction or the capital costs of larger-scale park and recreation projects.

Why Congress Should Act

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, more than four out of every five Americans live in an urban or metropolitan area. Fully functional park systems play an essential role in a community's ability to create jobs, stimulate growth, entice business investments, recruit a highly skilled workforce and attract tourism dollars. Access to quality park and recreation opportunities also positively impacts public health and provides for cost-effective and non-regulatory means of addressing environmental and conservation concerns.

The absence of funding specifically for urban park and recreation projects, however, has caused park and recreation infrastructure to deteriorate at alarming rates. As a result, many American communities now suffer from a lack of green space, dilapidated and outdated facilities, unsafe playgrounds and inadequate access to recreation resources.

The availability of park and recreation infrastructure funding provided through grants and loans would address these issues. Additionally, to receive funding under the Act, communities would be required to engage in comprehensive long-term planning to identify and address the community's future park and recreation infrastructure needs.

In order to put our economy back on the path of long-term economic growth, we must empower local communities with the ability to create an environment where businesses and working families can thrive. By providing grants and innovative financing specifically for local parks and recreation, Congress has the opportunity to spur economic growth and address many of this nation's most costly problems at the community level.





Parks and Recreation Attracts Businesses

- ★ Corporate CEOs say that employee quality of life is one of the three most important factors in locating a new business, and small companies indicate that parks, recreation and open space are a top priority in choosing where to start up.
- ★ Publications such as *Forbes*, *BusinessWeek* and the *Wall Street Journal* consistently cite the presence of quality park and recreation resources as key criteria in listing the best cities for businesses, jobs and places to live.

Parks Create Jobs and Economic Growth

- ★ In addition to attracting businesses and the jobs that come with them, a study by The Political Economy and Research Institute of the University of Massachusetts shows that investment in parks, reforestation and land restoration generates jobs at a much higher rate than most other sectors including new highway construction, Wall Street and conventional energy sources.
- ★ Outdoor recreation contributes \$646 billion to the U.S. economy, supports 6.1 million direct jobs, and generates \$80 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue, each year.¹

Parks Increase Property Values and Grow Tax Revenues

- ★ More than 30 studies have shown that parks and green space positively affect real property values for adjacent properties by as much as 25 percent.²
- ★ They also increase local tax revenue and attract tourism dollars.³

Parks and Recreation Improve Public Health

- ★ The CDC reports that childhood obesity has tripled in the last 30 years, that less than 25 percent of adults engage in recommended levels of physical activity, and that obesity is a leading cause of chronic disease.

- ★ The occurrence of these diseases in youth is on the rise, and the age of onset is getting younger. For the first time in history, American children may have a shorter life-span than their parents. Increased access to parks, green space and recreation opportunities is essential to becoming a healthier nation and reducing unsustainable healthcare costs.

Parks Provide a Cost-Effective Solution To Environmental Concerns

- ★ Parkland can lead to significant savings for localities by cost-effectively dealing with conservation and environmental concerns.
- ★ A 2007 study in Philadelphia shows that the city's park system contributed nearly \$7.5 million in savings for storm water treatment and air pollution mitigation.⁴
- ★ Parks also make neighborhoods safer by protecting against environmental contamination.

Parks Support Veterans and Military Families

- ★ Therapeutic and adaptive recreation programs provide invaluable benefits to disabled and injured veterans.
- ★ These programs not only aid in physical recovery but also help to address mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other afflictions suffered by wounded warriors.
- ★ Additionally, many local recreation programs support employment and mentoring opportunities that help veterans transition back to civil life as well as increased social opportunities for military families who bravely serve our country.

¹ Outdoor Industry Association

² American Planning Association

³ American Planning Association

⁴ The Trust for Public Land

