

Hi, mgarland4
Member Services
LOGOUT

July 30, 2003

E-mail story Print

- MARKETPLACE**
classifieds and more
- Careers
 - Cars
 - Homes
 - Rentals
 - Newspaper Ads
 - Personals

In print. Online.
Your future is here.

calendarlive
Art, Theater, Night Life
Movies, Music, TV, Dining

The Nation

News
Iraq Aftermath

- The World**
- The Nation**
- California / Local**
- Business**
- Politics**
- Sports**
- Travel**
- Editorials, Op-Ed**

- Sections**
- Arts & Entertainment
 - Books
 - Chess
 - Columns
 - Education
 - Environment
 - Food
 - Health
 - Highway 1
 - Home
 - Kids' Reading Room
 - Magazine
 - Obituaries
 - Real Estate
 - Religion
 - Science & Medicine
 - Style & Culture
 - Sunday Opinion
 - Technology
 - Times Poll
 - Week in Focus
 - For the Record

- Editions**
- Print Edition
 - National (PDF)
 - Wireless

Extras

THE NATION

Ex-Interior Chiefs Condemn Plan to Privatize Park Service Jobs

By Julie Cart, Times Staff Writer

Two former secretaries of the Interior who served under Democratic presidents broke a long silence Tuesday with a strongly worded condemnation of the Bush administration's initiative to turn National Park Service jobs over to the private sector.

Bruce Babbitt and Stewart Udall called the policy "radical," "reckless" and an "attempt to dismantle the National Park Service."

The two Arizona Democrats said that they had refrained from criticizing the administration, but that the controversial privatization program — in which 70% of the full-time jobs in the park service could be replaced by private sector employees — had forced them to speak out.

"The administration is hellbent on this radical course of action," Babbitt said, in a conference call from Albuquerque. "The hour is late. It's our national heritage that's at stake."

The administration says the private sector can more economically and efficiently perform the same tasks now accomplished by some rangers, scientists and other employees.

But permanent employees say the proposal is a way of bringing in replacement workers who could receive lower wages and benefits, but wouldn't have the knowledge or professionalism of career park service staff.

Babbitt served two terms under President Clinton, and Udall served under presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Until Tuesday, neither had offered an opinion about the environmental record of President Bush or his Interior secretary, Gale A. Norton.

Babbitt said every new president is entitled to a grace period, and he jokingly characterized himself and Udall as having been "sitting on the front porch in rocking chairs." Whatever reluctance they might have harbored apparently fell away in the news conference; each man was scathing in his assessment of the administration's conservation record, especially as it pertains to the park service.

"This administration is so indifferent to the values of conservation agencies," Udall said. "I'm appalled. My friends say I've waited too long, but I'm speaking out."

The privatization program is part of the administration's effort to identify as many as 850,000 federal jobs that could be performed by private sector employees.

The "competitive sourcing" initiative originated from the Office of Management and Budget and aims to streamline federal agencies and make them more cost-effective by replacing some positions with outside contractors. Proponents say the free market-style competition brings out the best in employees.

As applied to the park service, the policy would eliminate most of the agency's scientists, maintenance

Times Headlines

Foes of Gay Marriage Find New Momentum

U.S. Indictments Target Mexican Drug Cartel

Bryant Case Recalls Race Issue

Poindexter Expected to Resign in Futures Market Controversy

Teamsters Likely to Back Gephardt

more >

SUBSCRIBE to the Los Angeles Times.
click here



College Connection
Sweepstakes
Crossword
Horoscope
Lottery
Traffic
Weather
Multimedia

Archives

Enter Keyword(s):

Detailed Search

SITE MAP

Los Angeles Times Subscription Services

(800) 252-9141
Home Delivery
Gift Subscriptions
College Discount
Mail Subscriptions
Additional Subscription
Information & FAQs

MARKETPLACE classifieds and more

- Careers
- Cars
- Homes
- Rentals
- Newspaper Ads
- Personals
- Times Guides
- Recycler.com

LA Times Initiatives

Times in Education
Reading by 9
LA Times Books
LA Times Family Fund
Times-Mirror Foundation
Community Events
Inside the Times

Partners



La Opinión
DIARIO

workers, fee collectors, lifeguards, museum curators, historians and archivists.

A broad swath of legislators and current and former park service employees oppose the plan. They say the responsibility for overseeing 380 parks and monuments is too important to entrust to people with little or no preparation for working within the nation's park system.

In April, park service Director Fran Mainella sent a memo to assistant Interior secretaries Lynn Scarlett and Craig Manson outlining several concerns about the program. Mainella said privatization could reduce visitor services, cause unexpected layoffs and undermine the agency's efforts to create a more ethnically diverse workforce. Soon after the memo was made public, Mainella wrote another one, expressing her support for the president's policy.

Babbitt said Tuesday that the administration's emphasis on profits has already turned some treasured places into "amusement parks," a theme echoed by Udall, who called the bottom-line approach a "slippery slope."

"We could very well end up with the complete privatization of the national parks," he said.

Babbitt, who refrained from naming Norton directly, said a "radical ideological group" within the administration is behind the outsourcing plan. Ultimately, he said, proponents of privatization would hand over the national parks to private companies.

"Submerged at the bottom of this is the radical property rights movement," Babbitt said. "At the bottom of much of these policies is a philosophy that would like to see the government dispose of all public lands and all natural resources and put [them] in the hands of the private sector and the industrial sector."

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at latimes.com/archives.



[Click here for article licensing and reprint options](#)