

**Letter from Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell to the Honorable Gale Norton,
Secretary of the Interior regarding Valley Forge National Historical Park,
December 15, 2005**



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

The Governor

December 15, 2005

The Honorable Gale Norton
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

I write to you as the principal federal officer responsible for the preservation and enhancement of Valley Forge National Historical Park (Valley Forge or the Park). Valley Forge has a unique place in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States. Indeed, Pennsylvania proudly established Valley Forge as its first state park in 1893, and it is universally recognized that the site constitutes sacred ground. I believe that those of us fortunate to serve in government have an obligation to act as fiduciaries and stewards of this land for all Americans, as well as future generations. It was with that spirit and intent that Pennsylvania transferred Valley Forge to the federal government in 1976.

In 1999, President Clinton signed PL106-86, The Pennsylvania Battlefields Protection Act, which authorized the Secretary of the Interior to work with the Valley Forge Historical Society (Society) to "facilitate the planning, construction, and operation of the Valley Forge Museum of the American Revolution on federal land within the boundary of Valley Forge National Historical Park." The Society transferred its public/private partnership agreements with the Department of the Interior (DOI) and National Park Service (NPS) to the American Revolution Center (ARC) in 2002.

This ARC project is a worthy one. An impressive team of iconic Americans, including historian David McCullough, architect Robert A.M. Stern, and exhibit designer Ralph Appelbaum have been participating in its development. In addition, the ARC project, as stated in the Cooperation Agreement, was also undertaken to "replace the Park's current visitor center, improve curation, storage, and exhibitory of the Park's collections, and enhance interpretation and educational programs" with the understanding that "federal funds are not likely to be appropriated for this purpose in the foreseeable future." In summary, successful implementation of the DOI / NPS / ARC partnership will continue to enhance the visitor experience at Valley Forge, particularly through the display of the ARC's preeminent American Revolution collection.

Valley Forge and the ARC have worked together for five years to develop a plan that would transform the Park from a deteriorating cultural resource now used mostly for recreation, to the fiscally healthy, historical, and cultural resource it deserves to be. With much excitement, the concept model of the ARC building was unveiled at Valley Forge by the NPS, the ARC, and myself in February 2004. Regrettably, as you know, the project is now in crisis and is not moving forward. I am both saddened and deeply frustrated by this unfortunate situation.

The Honorable Gale Norton
December 15, 2005
Page 2

Seventeen months of NPS-funded qualitative and quantitative analysis of the five-year public/private partnership's program validated the ARC building size, programmatic scope, and economic sustainability and visitation projections. It also concluded that the project was an economic benefit to the entire Park as a result of the proposed \$100 million capital campaign that was deemed achievable. Nevertheless, DOI / NPS unilaterally proceeded to effectively veto the ARC project in August 2005 by mandating a significantly reduced building that is not economically sustainable, and which does not provide the agreed upon visitor experience.

I am gravely concerned by this chain of events because, as described by the Park in its July 2005 draft General Management Plan (GMP), the decline of the Park since 1976 has been "measurable." The draft GMP also states "...the Park has not met its mission to ensure that the nationally significant resources of Valley Forge are here for future generations to enjoy." The Park and the ARC have, according to the draft GMP, "cooperated since 2001 on a number of other initiatives, and the benefits of the partnership are already apparent."

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania accepts the extensive analysis that has been done, which shows the extraordinary benefits for Valley Forge with the originally conceived ARC in place. Pennsylvania's commitment has been demonstrated by its pledge of \$20 million to the ARC's construction.

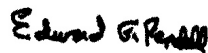
As I discussed with your Chief of Staff in my recent visit to Washington, DC, we believe the time for resolution of these roadblocks is now. If the United States, through DOI, is unwilling or unable to protect and preserve Valley Forge through the DOI / NPS / ARC partnership, the commonwealth is prepared to accept that responsibility through a variety of possible courses of action. One option is to return Valley Forge in its entirety to the care of the commonwealth. I would be amenable to that approach. It is my belief that we could restore the Park significantly and complete the ARC construction, which would do so much to enhance the restoration process.

An alternative approach would be for DOI to allow the commonwealth and the ARC use of a hundred acres, so the project can be completed as originally envisioned. The ARC and the commonwealth would sign a Memorandum of Understanding that we would not seek any additional federal funds for capital or management costs.

Under this scenario, I believe the ARC should be run along the model of the National Constitution Center with the 501(c) (3) Board accepting full management responsibility and costs. The Park Service would participate through Board membership.

I would appreciate hearing from you on these matters as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns that you wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Edward G. Rendell
Governor