Scenic America recently participated in a rally on Capitol Hill in support of legislation that will invest in infrastructure repair in our National Parks system. National Parks generated $35 billion for the U.S. economy in 2017 and supported over 300,000 private sector jobs nationally.

The National Park Service (NPS) manages more than just National Parks, they are stewards of 75,000 public assets including historic buildings, national monuments, employee housing and seawalls. Currently, National Park units are in need of nearly $12 billion worth of deferred maintenance projects. These projects range from crumbling hiking trails, roads, and bridges to vital water and electrical systems.

Scenic America, as a partner organization in the National Parks Conservation Association’s Second Century Action Coalition, is advocating for the Restore Our Parks Act (S. 500) and the Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act (H.R. 1225).

S. 500, sponsored by Senators Rob Portman (R-OH), Lamar Alexander (R-TN), and Angus King (I-ME), proposes to invest $6.5 billion over five years in the highest priority NPS deferred maintenance projects, seeks funding from royalties acquired through oil, gas and coal extraction that are not otherwise in use, and establishes a backlog fund for miscellaneous NPS maintenance projects. H.R. 1225 follows a nearly identical budget and funding, but seeks to dedicate this funding to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau for Indian Education, in addition to the NPS.

These bills are of particular importance to Scenic America and our supporters for several reasons. As the sole advocates for preserving the visual beauty of our country, supporting our National Parks is right in line with our mission and initiatives: many of these public spaces are among our nation’s most beautiful.

Honoring parks and open spaces means maintaining the infrastructure that increases visitor enjoyment, accessibility, and safety. Our promotion of national and state scenic byways is also related to park infrastructure, since many of these byways run through the parks system. Finally, our dedication to preserving local character and encouraging the economic development of park gateway communities would be greatly advanced by these bills.

With over 200 co-sponsors from both sides of the aisle, these bills have strong bipartisan support. Many of our legislators understand the importance of this effort. All of the sponsors who spoke at the press conference recognized our parks as invaluable resources to our country. Fiscal conservatives stressed the additional importance of addressing maintenance immediately, as these projects will only get more and more expensive over time. Contact your federal legislators today and tell them why you support S. 500 and H.R. 1225 and why they should too.