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By: Eric Finke, Staff Member

The government shutdown of 2013 lasted for 16 days at an estimated cost of \$24 billion dollars to our economy. [i] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn1) Lost in the midst of the shutdown dollar headlines are the effects still felt by the closure of national parks in states across the country including in Kentucky. [ii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn2) The shutdown was not only an inconvenience for tourists, it resulted in furloughed workers and lost revenue for states that depend on such funds. With greater uncertainty to come in the months ahead as Congress once again must negotiate a debt deal, states should consider taking control of the national parks to preserve their natural wonders and local economies. [iii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn3)

Kentucky is home to multiple national parks, rivers, and trails, including Mammoth Cave, Cumberland Gap, Big South Fork, and the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace. [iv] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn4) These national parks are part of more than 401 parks across the country. An estimated 715,000 visitors travel to the

national parks a day, generating revenue of nearly \$415,000 at each site from entrance fees and park services alone.[v] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn5) This may not sound staggering by itself, but it is estimated these visitors invest a combined \$76 million in local economies each and everyday the parks are open.[vi] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn6) Cumberland Gap is located in Bell County, Kentucky where tourism director Judy Barton gave a grim report for hotels, restaurants, and shops that suffered from the shutdown: “When you have a million visitors to the park every year and it closes, that’s serious.”[vii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn7)

To avert future reoccurrences of this shutdown hangover on communities, the state of Alaska is looking to fund national parks on a state budget.[viii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn8) The idea resulted from the shutdown itself as states were allowed to reopen parks on their own.[ix] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn9) Rather than waiting for a potential shutdown to occur again, states could follow this lead and prepare their own budgets to support the funding of national parks within their states.

Politics aside, Kentucky has been a leader for the country in setting up the healthcare exchange to provide insurance to uninsured residents as part of the evolving Affordable Care Act.[x] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_edn10) If Kentucky is capable of leading the nation in a healthcare exchange at the state level, there must be attention paid to the funding of national parks as well. This forward thinking by the state would help to prevent future economic fallout now being felt by the national parks and their local communities from the government shutdown right here at home.

[i] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref1) Tom Cohen et al., Obama signs bill to end partial shutdown, state off debt ceiling crisis, CNN.com (Oct. 17, 2013, 12:51 A.M.), <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/16/politics/shutdown-showdown/index.html>utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+rs%2Fcin_allpolitics+(RSS%3A+Politics).

[ii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref2) Jan Warren, Effects of government shutdown begin to be felt in Kentucky, Kentucky.com (Oct. 1, 2013), <http://www.kentucky.com/2013/10/01/2854668/effects-of-government-shutdown.html>.

[iii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref3) Kate Sheppard, National Park Closures Could Cost Local Communities \$30 Million A Day In Lost Revenue, Huffington Post (Oct. 1, 2013, 5:21 p.m.), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/01/national-park-closures_n_4025340.html.

[iv] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref4) National Park Service, Kentucky National Parks (last updated Oct. 17, 2013), <http://www.nps.gov/state/ky/list.htm#program-parks>.

[v] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref5) Gregory Korte, Shutdown’s economic toll on parks: \$76 million a day, USATODAY.com (Oct. 10, 2013, 9:55 a.m.), <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/10/10/national-parks-shutdown-cost/2957033/>.

[vi] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref6) Id.

[vii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref7) Warren, *supra* note 2.

[viii] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref8) Liz Ruakin, Bills don’t move, but Alaskans in Congress file away, Alaska Public Media (Oct. 22, 2013, 4:43 p.m.), <http://www.alaskapublic.org/2013/10/22/congressman-young-props-legislation-to-restrain-feds/>.

[ix] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref9) Josh Hicks, States want reimbursement for funding national parks during shutdown, The Washington Post (Oct. 22, 2013, 6:00 a.m.), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/federal-eye/wp/2013/10/22/states-want-reimbursement-for-funding-national-parks-during-shutdown/>

[x] (http://www.blogger.com/blogger.g?blogID=8202935745006855383#_ednref10) Laura Ungar, Kentucky leads U.S. charge to get uninsured signed up for Obamacare, The Courier-Journal (Oct. 20, 2013), <http://www.courier-journal.com/article/2013/10/19/PRIME07/310190023/Kentucky-leads-U-S-charge-get-uninsured-signed-up-Obamacare>.

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