

January 15, 2009

The Honorable Butch Otter
Governor of the State of Idaho
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720

Dear Governor Otter:

This letter comes to you as an expression of my profound disappointment and protest over your decision to eliminate all state funding for Old Mission State Park (OMSP). I learned about this decision in the same way my family, friends, colleagues, and those connected closely to the park did – via the media. To say we were surprised is an understatement.

OMSP is the site of the oldest standing building in the state and was an important crossroads in the development of Northern Idaho. Today, the Mission and park are unsurpassed educational resources that are well loved and used by nearly one hundred thousand area residents and visitors from around the world every year. The park ranks first in visitation amongst all four state heritage parks, third in visitation amongst Idaho's historical and cultural museums and attractions (including those in Boise), and sixth in visitation amongst all state parks. Of all the state historic sites, only OMSP tells the story of American Indian history and culture. In light of this unique focus and high visitation, OMSP is one of the jewels in the Idaho park system.

OMSP is also an important economic development and tourism engine for a region that, as you know, over the years has suffered the dramatic loss of businesses and jobs, more so than other areas of the state. And now with the new and much needed visitor center about to come on line, we anticipate serving more people than ever before. To cut state funding at this critical juncture is to severely limit services, programs, and benefits that the people of the Silver Valley and region currently enjoy and will enjoy in the future.

The fact is, OMSP's visitation surpasses that of 19 other state parks which you intend to keep open. Thus, the question of fairness arises. I understand the Coeur d'Alene Tribe will do what it can, and yet at the same time state funding is still needed. I am hopeful you will acknowledge the valuable role OMSP plays in this region and demonstrate your support of this significant site with continued funding. The state has a responsibility to ensure its cultural, educational, and historical resources like Old Mission State Park are available to all people. Continued funding of OMSP will fulfill this obligation.

I would be grateful for a response to this matter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

H. F. Magnuson

cc: Chief Allan
Robert Matt
Robert Meinen
David White