



PEER

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

962 Wayne Ave • Suite 610 • Silver Spring, MD 20910

January 15, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum,

As we enter the new year and prepare to celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary, we write to raise concerns about the creation and funding of Freedom250 and its relationship to the congressionally authorized America250 celebration.

America's 250th anniversary is a national milestone that belongs to all Americans, regardless of political affiliation, religious viewpoints, or ethnic or racial background. Congress intentionally established America250 as a bipartisan effort to ensure that this commemoration would unite the country, reflect our shared democratic values, and tell a full and honest American story.

As you know Freedom250 was recently established as a Delaware Corporation by the Trump administration and has assumed many of the functions of America 250. We are concerned about [reports](#) that indicate taxpayer dollars earmarked for America 250 are being diverted to Freedom250. This reported transfer raises serious concerns that demand clear public answers. The American people are paying for this commemoration. They deserve to know where their money is going—and what's it's being used for.

First, the Department must disclose how at least \$100 million in taxpayer funds that were diverted away from America250 to Freedom250 are being used. This should include a publicly available budget, clear descriptions of funded activities, identification of contractors or grantees, and an explanation of who has decision-making authority over expenditures at Freedom250.

Second, the Department must clarify whether Freedom250 is raising private funds in addition to receiving taxpayer dollars, including through selling merchandise. If so, the sources of those non-taxpayer funds, the amounts raised, and the rules governing their use must be publicly disclosed. Any private fundraising should be clearly segregated from federal funds and subject to rigorous reporting and auditing requirements to prevent conflicts of interest or undue political influence over a national civic commemoration.

Third, the public deserves clarification regarding the role of the National Park Foundation in relation to Freedom250. Freedom250 is listed as a subsidiary of the National Park Foundation, the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service. Freedom250 lists its address as that of the National Park Foundation. Washington, DC records indicate that its resident agent is an employee of the National Park Foundation. If National Park Foundation funds, staff time, or other in-kind resources are being used to support Freedom250, the Department should disclose how those contributions are accounted for, whether they were formally approved by the Foundation's board, and how they align with the Foundation's charitable mission. Staff time and in-kind support represent real costs to the public and must be treated with the same transparency as direct expenditures.

Taken together, these concerns point to a broader issue of oversight. The creation of a parallel entity to carry out work similar to America250 is blurring accountability, weakening congressional intent, and undermining public trust. That trust is essential if the 250th anniversary is to be a moment of shared reflection rather than division.

The American people deserve confidence that their money is being used responsibly, lawfully, and in service of an inclusive national commemoration.

The Department of the Interior can resolve these questions quickly if it chooses to. It can release a full accounting of Freedom250's budget, disclose all fundraising activity, clarify the role of the National Park Foundation, and explain—clearly—how all of this aligns with congressional laws and intent regarding America's 250th Anniversary celebration, the use of tax payers dollars, and the mixing of public, private and charitable funds in implementing the President's agenda.

A 250th anniversary celebration should strengthen trust in our democratic institutions, not erode it. Transparency is not a distraction from patriotism. It is one of its most essential expressions.

We look forward to your prompt response and to seeing the Department take concrete steps to restore public trust through openness and accountability.

Sincerely,

Timothy Whitehouse
Executive Director

Cc:
Chairman Lee
Ranking Member Heinrich
Chairman Westerman
Ranking Member Huffman
All members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
All member of the House Committee on Natural Resources