

# THE FRIENDS OF LIBERTY STATE PARK

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August 3, 2015

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Dear NJDEP Commissioner Bob Martin,

I hope you are enjoying the summer. I'm writing about your and the Governor's plans to privatize and commercialize parts of Liberty State Park, the priceless and inspiring American public land behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island, and about the Governor's responsibility to the public regarding maximizing the opportunities for public participation in decision-making.

Because LSP is the neighbor of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, the park itself has also become a symbol of democracy as those national shrines to democracy are. So especially for this New Jersey and American park, perhaps the most sacred public space in our nation next to the Gettysburg battlefield, the Governor and you, should show your respect for the democratic process and avoid a "ramrodding" of plans, by providing **at least two public hearings at Liberty State Park, one on a middle of the week evening and one on a Saturday. A Public Comment Period of at least one month is also the only way to show respect for democracy and for this beloved park, an American treasure.** LSP elicits powerful emotions due to the iconic American monuments in the harbor, its precious urban open space and its uplifting views. Anything less than two public hearings and month long public comment period would be a subversion of democracy and an assault on the spirit of Liberty State Park and Lady Liberty.

Lady Liberty must be honored as the world's greatest symbol of democracy and the Governor should respect the 39 years of overwhelming public opposition to plans such as he and you are about to push forward with the wrong-headed idea that this park, built for the purpose of serving the Public Good and paid for by state and federal taxes (Green Acres and LWCF funds), should "pay for itself". No park should pay for itself. Though taxes, CBT and NRD awards, LSP can operate and keep improving. LSP already brings in \$1.5 million annually not counting salaries - from the marina, two restaurants, ferry concession, special use permits, etc. Liberty Science Center and the ferries to our national monuments provide enough "tourist attractions." LSP is N.J.'s crown jewel park overlooking the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island and it was our 1976 bicentennial gift to the nation. It provides open space, inspiring vistas, lawns and walking paths for its annual 5 ½ million visitors to enjoy. Most of the annual visitors are urban people coming to use the park as a park. Taking away open space or views or restricting access will be an assault on the urban people who use this scarce urban open space for the quality of our lives.

Last point, based on the winter NY Times story and the 1986 and 2001 plans to build a concert venue, the worst threat to the urban people's use of LSP, would be a commercial concert shell venue as the inevitable traffic jams would block and restrict use of LSP on summer weekends, the most important days of the year. Already, LSP police close Pesin Dr. on summer weekends for parts of the day because the park runs out of South side and Freedom Way parking spaces.

Lastly Commissioner, we feel it's critical and respectful of the public process that you reveal the Governor's and your plans after August due to people's vacations, and we request that you send us a copy of the final report and plans at the earliest possible time and also email them to us.

Sincerely,  
Sam Pesin, president