



Governor Josh Shapiro  
501 North 3rd Street  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

November 30, 2025

**SUBJECT: Failure of Washington Crossing Historical Park to Support a Simple Veteran Request to Cross the Delaware River on Veterans Day**

Honorable Josh Shapiro:

As a representative of Last Salute, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, I am writing to express my deep disappointment with the Friends of Washington Crossing Historical Park for failing to approve a simple request from a group of military Veterans to cross the Delaware River this past Veterans Day. I am reaching out to you because I believe this is not an isolated incident but indicates a systemic leadership problem within the Pennsylvania Historic Parks system.

Our crossing was meant to be a symbolic act to honor George Washington's famous crossing on the night of December 25-26, 1776. In an effort to do the right thing, I contacted the Friends of Washington Historic Park in early August of this year to ask for permission for our Veterans to cross the Delaware on November 11<sup>th</sup>; to launch at 6:00 AM (when no one is around). I was told the river was low and that I should instead reach out to local municipalities. I did, but that effort turned into an unproductive goose chase.

What was most unprofessional was that after weeks of phone calls to the Park, many of which went unanswered, plus a bureaucratic run-around within the Parks system, our request was finally denied five days before Veterans Day.

The reasons for the Park's denial included the removing their launching-dock, ongoing construction in the Park, and the need for permission from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (which takes about three months). I consider these last-minute excuses to be hogwash. Our plan was to launch a Zodiac rubber boat with six Veterans (most who experienced recent combat in Iraq and Afghanistan). We don't use docks, and we can easily walk around the construction. Plus, I also don't see why a formal request to cross the Delaware, a five-minute paddle trip, requires official approval from the DCNR.

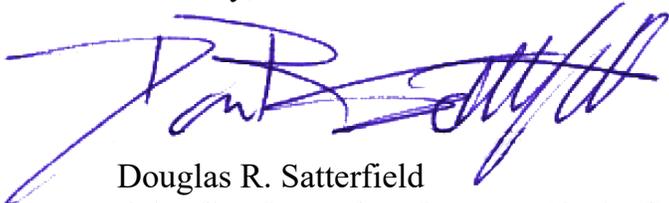
I strongly believe this failure by the Park is part of a systemic leadership decision-making problem within the Parks system. Our request should have taken about 10 seconds for any competent leader to approve. *“Wear life vests, don't break anything or get hurt, good luck, and send me a photograph.”* That's it. Simple. But instead, I was given a lengthy explanation of how hard the staff works at the Parks. And, yes, I can

believe that they do work hard. Yet, when you make mountains out of molehills, the fact is that it makes a lot of work; unnecessary work.

After our request was denied, I received an apology from the Parks and an admission that they had “dropped the ball.” Plus, they promised to review their internal communications to prevent this kind of failure from happening again. Their Operations Officer said they are willing and eager to work with us in the future to make this trip possible. Despite all this, we will also continue to work with them.

The Friends of Washington Historic Park missed a great chance to honor our Veterans by simply approving a clear and simple request. The damage to their reputation as the Friends of Washington Crossing Historic Park is obvious.

Sincerely,



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cc: Dana Fritz, Chief of Staff to the Governor  
Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources  
John Godzieba, President, Friends of Washington Crossing Park Board of Directors  
Jennifer Martin, Executive Director, Friends of Washington Crossing Park  
Michelle Flanagan, Director of Operations, Friends of Washington Crossing Park  
Last Salute Historical Files