



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024



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Thank you for your inquiry about the Lafayette Park permitting process and the August 12, 2018 permitted event organized by Jason Kessler.

We recognize there may be concerns about the “white civil rights rally” that Mr. Kessler is planning, but the permitting process for all national parks is content neutral to ensure that all Americans can exercise their Constitutional rights in these public spaces.

As Federal land, national parks provide a forum in which citizens can exercise their rights of speech and assembly. The United States Constitution guarantees everyone the right to speak freely and to assemble peaceably, regardless of the content of their message.

In approving the request of Jason Kessler to hold his rally in Lafayette Park, the National Park Service is neither condoning nor condemning the message being delivered by him. Rather, we are providing an arena in which he can deliver his message, the validity of which will ultimately be decided by those who hear it.

The National Park Service hosts hundreds of First Amendment activities each year. Though the messages of those events are as diverse and varied as the parks that host them, the one constant is that each of those assemblies is a living, breathing example of our nation’s democratic ideals that are expressed virtually every day in Washington, D.C. area national parks.

Mr. Kessler’s event has been approved; however, no permit has been issued at this time. We are gathering information from the organizers on the details of the event that will be used to create the permit. When issued, the permit will spell out the specific conditions under which the event will take place, to ensure public safety and the protection of park resources. We do not consider the content of the message presented in the permitting process.

The National Park Service and United States Park Police are working diligently with our partner law enforcement agencies in planning for the August rally to ensure that everyone, demonstrators, visitors and D.C. residents alike, will find a safe atmosphere in which to visit.

We will continue to ensure that the public has accurate and up-to-date information, as we work through these important issues. Associated documents, including applications and copies of the permits once they are issued, are posted to the National Park Service Freedom of Information Act reading room under President’s Park, as they become available.

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