

<http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/economic-intelligence/2013/04/18/national-park-service-senior-pass-is-ripe-for-reform>

The Park Service's Senseless Giveaway to Seniors

By [Stan Veuger](#)

April 18, 2013

Stan Veuger is a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

The National Park Service currently offers seniors over the age of 61 the opportunity to purchase [lifetime passes for \\$10](#). That is \$10 for perennial access to 410 national parks as well hundreds and hundreds of recreation sites managed by the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

To put this into perspective, a one-time ticket to the Grand Canyon, just one of the National Parks, costs everyone else \$25.

This policy illustrates a number of frustrating features of federal government policymaking. First of all, it caters to a specific special-interest group that is chosen to receive benefits no one else receives, in this case the elderly.

Second, much like programs such as Social Security and Medicare, which provide benefits to senior citizens that far exceed the contributions they made to them, it redistributes funds from poor to old under the assumption that Ponzi schemes never fall apart. Third, it is an example of utterly unnecessary spending (or, more precisely, foregoing of revenue) at a time when many agencies, including the National Park Service, are being forced to tighten their belts thanks, in particular, to the automatic budget cuts put in place under sequestration.

Fortunately Rep. Jackie Speier, a California Democrat, [is on the case](#). During a House Oversight hearing she told National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarves the following: "\$10? At age 65? I think we need to look at that. There's a lot of people who can pay more than \$10 for the rest of their lives."

Indeed. It may be peanuts in the grand scheme of things, but if even these kinds of reform are out of reach, all hope is lost for more comprehensive fiscal fixes.