

Roth: Happy birthday for all of us Americans

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on August 29, 2016.



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Happy birthday for all of us Americans

If this heading makes you think you've picked up a copy of *The Journal Record's* July 4th issue, I apologize for the confusion. We are always right to joyously celebrate our country's Independence Day and the importance of the somewhat intangible principles of freedom and liberty that bind our amazing republic, but I am wishing you all a very happy birthday for something more tangible: the land, rivers, valleys and mountains that make up our National Park Service,

which turned 100 on Aug. 26.

Happy birthday indeed. The first hundred years have not been easy, including the start in 1916 when Congress passed the National Park Service Organic Act, creating a new agency with the U.S. Department of the Interior. The NPS is charged with the roles of preserving the ecological and historical integrity of places while also making them available for public use and enjoyment.

According to their mission: "The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world."

With more than 275 million visitors a year, our national parks create unique opportunities for busy American families, who now more than ever dwell in urban settings, to connect with nature and to develop an appreciation for the boundless, living world around our beautiful America.

Even before the National Park Service was officially begun, patriotic tributes to our land existed in many forms, such as *America the Beautiful*, whose words were first written as a poem in 1895, then soon combined with a choirmaster's music and published in their first form in 1910. The lyrics we know today are as important to honor our American experience as perhaps our national anthem:

O beautiful for spacious skies,

For amber waves of grain,

For purple mountain majesties

Above the fruited plain!

America! America!

God shed His grace on thee

And crown thy good with brotherhood

From sea to shining sea!

We should honor and defend these treasures in every way, as a unique enrichment to the American experience.

And just this past week, the designation of the 87,500-acre Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument along the Maine Coast and the Penobscot River, creating the 413th national park site, home to lynx, bears, moose, brook trout and rare birds such as the American three-toed woodpecker, provides yet another chance for all Americans to visit the land from sea to shining sea.

When I was a teenager, my dad began offering me life and financial advice from his own observations. And although I wish I would have taken better to heart concepts like compounding interest, something that has always stayed with me was his admonition to: "invest in the land and earth around you, as it may be the only finite resource as an investment choice you can make."

I am thankful that our forebearers believed the same about the amazing majesty of places like Rocky Mountain National Park, Yellowstone, the Great Smokey Mountains, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite and so many others. Cheers to the next 100 years.

So please, as you contemplate the ways you might celebrate your upcoming Labor Day holiday, please consider visiting one of your many national parks, monuments and sites and help celebrate those visionaries that made today's inspiration still possible.

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