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November 16, 2011

Mr. Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1848 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Jarvis:

I am writing in regard to the concession management contract for the historic Volcano House at the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, island of Hawaii.

Mr. David Donald and Ms. Ann Lee of The Volcano Project (TVP) recently informed me that they have submitted a proposal to the National Park Service (NPS) for the Volcano House concession. TVP is a nonprofit organization based in the community of Volcano, Hawaii Island. TVP's bid application to NPS proposes the continued management of the Volcano House as a hotel while providing employment training and education in the culinary arts and hospitality services for young people, especially youth at risk. Attached is a copy of TVP's executive summary for your review.

TVP has submitted its proposal to NPS in competition with several large U.S. mainland based hotel management corporations. I wish to express my strong support of TVP's proposal as NPS considers the several bids submitted for the Volcano House concession.

TVP's proposal is community based, a project that has received substantial support from over fifty community leaders and organizations in Hawaii, representing a range of interests in business, social services, economic development, the Native Hawaiian culture and the environment. Several state and local elected officials representing communities on Hawaii Island have also expressed their strong support of this project including Hawaii County Mayor William Kenoi. Also noteworthy is the support TVP has received from a number of NPS retirees who are knowledgeable about the history of the Volcano House and the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, having worked for many years at the Park in various professional capacities. Attached is a list of those who have written to NPS in support of TVP's proposal. Indeed, let me share with you excerpts from a sampling of letters from those who have written to NPS in support of TVP's project:

"The Volcano Project will also promote the culture, cuisine and the people of Hawaii, and I believe this initiative will generate new jobs by training a new class of entrepreneurs and small business people. This program will help to create a skilled workforce that will benefit private employers in the tourism sector." **Honorable William P. Kenoi, Mayor, County of Hawaii**

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“Since our founding in 1974, it has been our goal to encourage and promote the interests of Native Hawaiians engaged in commerce, services and the professions of NHCC members in a variety of economic, social and public affairs. This would do it! And, the program targets the money it makes to fund an educational institute, benefitting all residents of Hawaii, but in particular, Hawaiian youth-at-risk. Thus, economic and educational opportunities will be created in rural areas, where both are traditionally sparse. This sounds like a win-win situation for Hawaiian youth and the NPS.” **Mr. Stephen Kaaa, President, Native Hawaiian Chamber of Commerce**

“I am very impressed by endorsements of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Royal Order of Kamehameha, Alu Like, and local kumu hula, indicating the benefit of their vision to the Hawaiian community and local youth. Volcano House sits in the rim of Kilauea Caldera, considered by many Native Hawaiians to be a sacred site. A concessionaire operating a cultural sensitive operation in this crucial location is highly welcome. The Volcano Project’s proposed culinary training is also especially appealing. Strong support in the community is based on sensitivity to local needs and culture as well as the realization that, as a local concessionaire, all of the revenue and profit from the Volcano House operation will stay in the community, rather than move out of state.” **Mr. Tim Tunison, Chief of Resources Management, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park (retired)**

I am also impressed by TVP’s management team assembled to operate the Volcano House. They provide a high level of professional management and training expertise in the hospitality industry and culinary arts. TVP has also brought together a “Renovation/Restoration Team” of experienced professionals in architecture and interior design who are tasked with the historical preservation and restoration of the Volcano House.

I have been advised that having a nonprofit organization bid on an NPS concession is unprecedented. Indeed, as a nonprofit, TVP mandates that its profits will remain in Hawaii to fund cultural, environmental and economic development programs and opportunities to help support the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and surrounding communities. This relationship between TVP, the Park and the various community interests provides tremendous opportunities for collaboration on projects and initiatives that would benefit the Park, community and the Volcano House while building a shared sense of partnership, support and goodwill.

Based on the information Mr. Donald and Ms. Lee shared with me, TVP’s bid for the Volcano House concession meets and substantially surpasses NPS requirements and qualifications, and in addition, offers NPS a project that is culturally and environmentally sensitive with broad community support. For these reasons, as NPS evaluates the several bids for the Volcano House management concession, I request that TVP’s proposal be given every consideration.

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Thank you for this opportunity to express my strong support for TVP's bid proposal for the Volcano House management concession.

Aloha pumehana,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel K. Akaka". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DANIEL K. AKAKA
U.S. Senator

Attachments