

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2018

Ms. Mary L. Kendall
Deputy Inspector General
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Kendall:

We are writing to request that you monitor and investigate instances of potential alterations to scientific reports, documents, or communications produced by the Department of Interior (DOI) as well as instances of political pressure influencing science at DOI. In April of this year news surfaced alleging political interference with a report by the National Park Service (NPS) on sea level rise. In response to that news, a number of us wrote a letter requesting that you open an investigation into the matter. While that report was ultimately released without politically-influenced edits or alterations, we remain concerned with DOI's ongoing treatment of scientists and scientific experts.

Earlier this month a study by the Union of Concerned Scientists titled "Science under President Trump" was released that surveyed scientists and scientific experts working for this administration.¹ Across the 16 federal agencies surveyed, problems reported by those at DOI were among the most severe. Nearly 80 percent of respondents working for NPS reported that political interests impacted the ability of NPS to make science-based decisions. Within the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) nearly 70 percent of respondents noted that the greatest barrier to science-based decisions was political influence. Nearly 80 percent of respondents working for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), a research-focused arm of DOI, reported that their attendance at scientific conferences over the past year is not similar to their attendance at conferences during the previous administration.

Numerous other examples that illustrate the animosity held by DOI leadership towards science include the NPS's rescinding of Director's Order #100, which provided guidance on resource stewardship within the NPS for the 21st Century, the unprecedented grant review process at DOI that requires every grant over \$50,000 to be reviewed by a political appointee who is not a subject matter expert but instead a close childhood friend of the Secretary, a new policy that prohibits scientists from communicating their results to the media without advance approval of content, the steep budget cuts proposed by this administration that reduce the federal

¹ Jacob Carter, Gretchen Goldman, and Charise Johnson, "Science under President Trump," *Center for Science and Democracy, Union of Concerned Scientists*, (August 2018), <https://www.ucsusa.org/2018survey>

workforce and target science-based programs, such as the Climate Adaptation Science Centers within USGS, the reassignment of career scientists to arbitrary positions, and complete disregard that climate change is occurring and caused by humans, despite the scientific consensus regarding the issue.

Actions by this administration have clearly illustrated disrespect for the important contributions that science makes to the decision-making process. While the final NPS sea level rise report maintained the science originally included, we have no reason to believe that the attacks on science and pressure by political appointees to alter science to fit the administration's narrative will cease. As such, we request that you remain diligent on this topic and open an investigation if any of the following come to your attention:

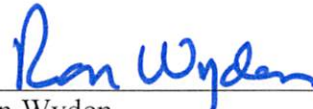
1. Instances of DOI employees, who are not subject matter experts, editing scientific reports, documents, or other scientific communications;
2. Instances where DOI's publication of scientific information is delayed or suppressed;
3. Instances where a political appointee denies or delays a scientific grant or cooperative agreement to suppress a topic;
4. Instances where industry inappropriately influences DOI science;
5. Instances of interference with scientific reports and scientific communications released or being prepared by DOI employees, including but not limited to responses to media requests and public presentations by scientific staff at the Department; and
6. Any activities at DOI that may violate DOI Manual Part 305 Chapter 3: Integrity of Scientific and Scholarly Activities.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

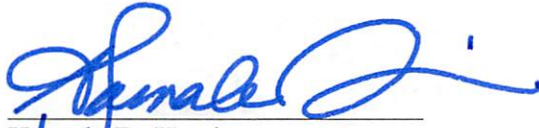
Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



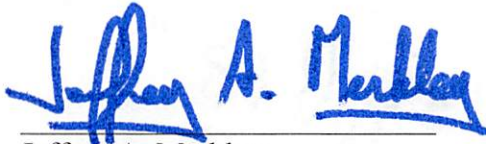
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



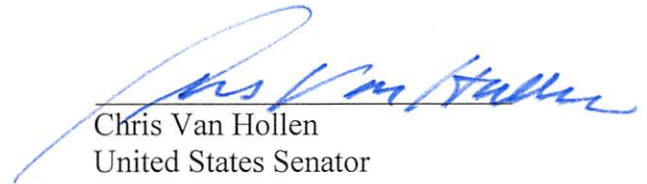
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Tammy Lubin
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

James A. ...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Tom ...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

John A. ...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Don Ober ...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

...
United States Senator
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Edward J. Markey
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator