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The Honorable
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The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

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Conrad Lautenbacher,
Ph.D. U.S. Navy (Retired)

The Honorable Neil Jacobs, Ph.D
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction
Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

October 2, 2020

Dear Secretary Ross and Acting Under Secretary Jacobs:

We write to you as members of the Leadership Council of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative ([JOCI](#)), and also former Administrators of NOAA serving both Republican and Democratic Presidents. We are gravely concerned over recent reported appointments that threaten NOAA's preeminent role as an agency dedicated first and foremost to scientific integrity.

Margaret Leinen, Ph.D.
The Honorable
Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Julie Packard
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The Honorable
Pietro Parravano
Randy Repass
Larry Robinson, Ph.D.
Andrew Rosenberg, Ph.D.
Paul Sandifer, Ph.D.

Never in the nation's history has the need for scientifically sound weather forecasting and climate science been more critical. With wildfires raging in multiple states and successive storms battering the Gulf coast, the public needs confidence that the federal agency charged with predictions that determine life and death decisions is acting with the utmost integrity and utilizing accurate and unbiased science. This applies across the board for NOAA science underpinning sound fisheries management decisions, conserving and protecting coastal and marine resources, responding to environmental emergencies, and aiding in disaster recovery.

Yet the appointments of David Legates and Ryan Maue to senior policy positions responsible for overseeing NOAA's work on climate science, weather forecasting and a range of issues is extremely alarming.

These industry-funded academics have long questioned the scientific consensus that human activity is a major contributor to the dramatic changes we are witnessing daily in the earth's climate, putting them far outside the mainstream of peer reviewed and empirically validated science. According to reporting by NPR and the Washington

Post, Ryan Maue has publicly questioned whether climate change poses any threat to humans as a species, and David Legates has derided spending taxpayer dollars on mitigating the "undetectable effects of climate change."

These appointments to help run the agency that produces much of the climate research funded by the U.S. government casts serious doubt on the Agency's ability to fulfill its mission to "understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans and coasts, and to share that information with our public."

NOAA has strongly adhered to a scientific integrity policy designed to "strengthen widespread confidence - from scientists, to decision-makers, to the general public - in the quality, validity, and

reliability of NOAA science and to denote the agency's commitment to a culture of support for excellence of NOAA's principal science asset, its employees." This integrity policy is meant to prevent political influence from interfering with its scientific work, as well as the communication of NOAA scientists' findings.

Clearly the appointment of these officials undermines the work of NOAA scientists, who have long recognized and documented the immense challenges climate change poses for our fishing industries, coastal communities, and national security. For 15 years, across both Republican and Democratic Administrations, JOCI has been a clarion voice for an effective national ocean policy that ensures sustainable use and protection of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes for today and far into the future. A respected and trusted NOAA is a cornerstone of achieving this vision.

We cannot be silent on this - we are concerned that the freedom of NOAA scientists to communicate honestly and openly about the impacts of climate change, the future of honest and accurate weather forecasting, objective fisheries management, disaster response and much more will be further curtailed if these appointments go forward.

We urge you to reconsider these appointments and chose scientists with a proven, unbiased record who will preserve the scientific independence and integrity that has been a hallmark of NOAA.

Sincerely,



Conrad Lautenbacher
NOAA Administrator 2001-2008



Jane Lubchenco
NOAA Administrator 2009-2013