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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025
<http://appropriations.senate.gov>

November 2, 2020

Dr. Neil Jacobs
Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Jacobs:

As one the Nation's preeminent scientific agencies, it is imperative that NOAA scientists and staff can present research and results absent political interference or censorship. I write to request a formal confirmation that you will uphold the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Administrative Order on Scientific Integrity (NAO 202-735d). Your response should also include a confirmation that NOAA's political appointees will also uphold the order.

I was concerned to learn of the manner of removal of NOAA's former Acting Chief Scientist Craig McLean by NOAA Chief of Staff Erik Noble in a recent *New York Times* article¹, especially given the role that Mr. McLean played in investigating the agency's response to the Hurricane Dorian forecast controversy that was found to be in violation of the Scientific Integrity Policy². I am also concerned that the installation of several new political appointees, including a well-known climate denier, could politicize and stifle NOAA's scientific research, particularly related to climate change. As the agency's leader, you have critical role in ensuring that scientific research and communication is allowed to flourish unimpeded.

As the Vice Chair of the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, I have worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that NOAA receives sufficient funding to perform its important scientific missions. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116-93), provides \$5.35 billion for NOAA, including \$590 million for the Oceanic and Atmospheric Research line office that serves as the scientific research arm of the agency. In particular, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, provides \$169.5 million for climate research. According to the same *New York Times* article, Dr. Noble has "pushed to install a new layer of scrutiny on grants that NOAA awards for climate research." I request additional information regarding this effort, including detailed documentation of new requirements that you are seeking to add. In addition, I request

¹ Flavelle, C., & Friedman L. (2020, October 27). As Election Nears, Trump Makes a Final Push Against Climate Science. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/27/climate/trump-election-climate-noaa.html>

² National Academy of Public Administration. (2020, March). An Independent Assessment of Allegations of Scientific Misconduct filed under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Scientific Integrity Policy. Academy Project Number 2249. https://www.napawash.org/uploads/NOAA_Scientific_Integrity_Final_Report_Redacted.pdf

information regarding the role recent political appointees Dr. Ryan Maue and Dr. David Legates are playing in preparing the next National Climate Assessment.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this request. I request a response by November 13, 2020.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
Vice Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies