

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 10, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

We are writing to express serious concern about reports that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has provided documents to the Department of Commerce proposing Fiscal Year 2018 cuts that will reduce the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) overall funding by as much as 17 percent. We are particularly concerned that the proposed cuts will fall disproportionately on programs of importance to the U.S. military and coastal state economies. We respectfully urge you to reconsider these harmful proposed cuts before the Administration releases its formal budget request.

According to reporting by the *Washington Post*, among the umbrella programs that will be most affected by the OMB's proposal are the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS) and the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR). The reported proposal calls for reducing NESDIS by \$513 million (22 percent of current funding), and OAR by \$126 million (26 percent of current funding). These deep reductions will have a negative impact on our nation as we rely on timely, accurate environmental monitoring and other services from NOAA that help to secure our communities and boost our economies.

For example, the U.S. military is heavily reliant on the forecasts and imagery provided by NOAA satellites within NESDIS for navigation on land, air, and sea. The military also relies on NOAA's forecasts for preparedness, response, and recovery when faced with extreme weather events.

Coastal states are highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, and reliable data and timely forecasts can help increase preparedness when serious weather events arise. For example, in 1992 Hurricane Iniki struck Kauai, Hawaii, causing 6 deaths and \$1.8 billion (1992 USD) in damage. If communities had not been warned about the hurricane in advance, the death toll could have been much higher. Deep cuts to NESDIS' monitoring equipment and activities will directly increase coastal states' vulnerability to hurricanes and other natural events that can threaten our communities and run counter to NOAA's building of a Weather-Ready Nation. Our safety rests on NOAA's ability to collect information, generate forecasts, and issue warnings well in advance so that we can take action.

The Sea Grant College Program within OAR is also critical to coastal states. Sea Grant is a \$73 million program that exists at 33 universities nationally, representing all coastal and Great Lakes states, as well as Guam and Puerto Rico. This program is a federal-local partnership that had an economic impact of \$575 million in 2015, representing an 854 percent return on federal investment. The Sea Grant Program has also created or sustained close to 3,000 businesses and 21,000 jobs annually in industries ranging from the development of sustainable aquaculture in Maine to increased coastal resilience in the Gulf of Mexico. This program has also supported nearly 2,000 undergraduate and graduate students, training the next generation to adequately protect our coastal economies and communities.

NOAA plays a vital role in advancing our understanding and stewardship of America's oceans. Through its many programs and offices, NOAA provides crucial research and support for our commercial fisheries as well as marine life conservation programs. Annual stock assessments and monitoring programs help to maintain sustainable practices and ensure long-term production of seafood in the U.S.

We know that the Administration faces difficult choices as it prioritizes federal resources. However, the President has identified national security and job creation as two of his key priorities and pursuing drastic cuts to NOAA would increase vulnerability to atmospheric, environmental, and coastal hazards, and decrease support for job creation, running directly counter to those goals.

We urge you to reconsider these dangerous cuts and instead submit a budget that requests adequate funding to allow NOAA to continue to provide the information and services needed to promote our national security and coastal economies.

Sincerely,



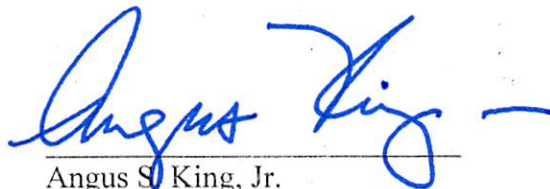
Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



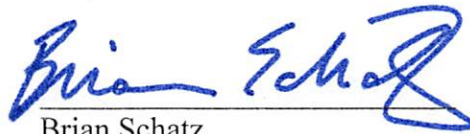
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator