

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 14, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A, United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Cochran, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

We are deeply concerned that Senate Interior Appropriations bill includes yet another cut to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). While the 2% total reduction in the Senate bill may seem small, it masks deep cuts into programs ensuring public health and enforcement, showing that this bill is another example of Republicans repeatedly pushing funding cuts that erode the EPA's core budget and capabilities. As a result of these sustained, partisan attacks, the EPA's overall budget is down 22% since 2010. Adjusted for inflation, the Senate's mark would be the smallest EPA operating budget since 1986. This trend cannot continue.

Moreover, this bill includes deep and harmful cuts in programs critical to protecting public health and the environment. For example, the Senate Interior Appropriations bill would make significant cuts to vital programs that protect clean air and water, and that hold polluters accountable, including reducing Enforcement by 10%, Compliance by 15%, human health protection in the water office by 9%, and clean air programs by 10%.

The Trump Administration has made dismantling the EPA a core mission. We urge you to oppose any legislation that advances that goal by further cutting the EPA's already decimated funding levels.

Because of these endless attacks on both the career employees and regional programs, the EPA is badly underfunded, understaffed and struggling to perform its basic and legally required functions. We cannot tolerate efforts to cripple an agency that, with increased use of Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments, is operating with staffing levels not seen since the 1980s.

The EPA provides critical technical assistance, grant funding, and support to state environmental agencies. With health crises across the country in the form of Superfund sites, lead contaminated water, and air pollution hotspots, we cannot afford to further erode the EPA's budget and dedicated workforce.

We must ensure that the EPA has the funding needed to carry out vital public health and environment protections. We urge you to oppose these insidious budget cuts, and oppose any reduction in funding for the EPA in the final Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations package. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



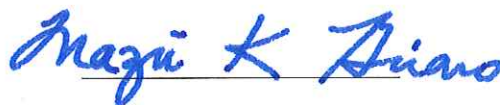
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



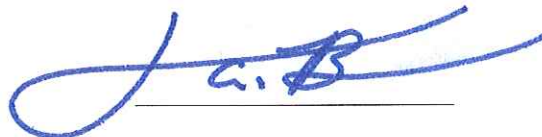
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



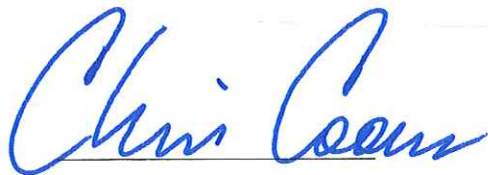
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



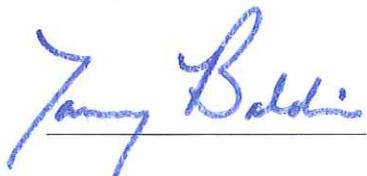
Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



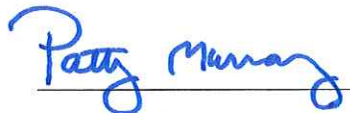
Robert P. Casey Jr.
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



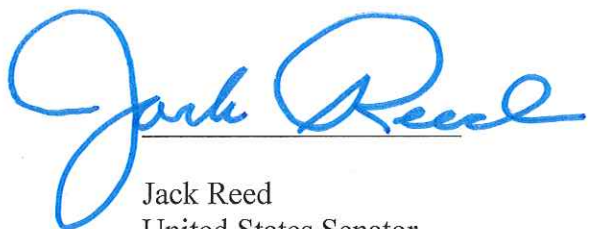
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



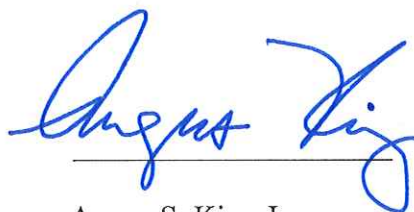
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



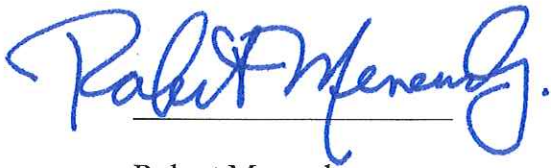
Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Menendez", written over a horizontal line.

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Amy Klobuchar", written over a horizontal line.

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Elizabeth Warren", written over a horizontal line.

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jon Tester", written over a horizontal line.

Jon Tester
United States Senator