

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

We write to express our profound outrage regarding the recent mass layoffs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).¹ The termination of hundreds of dedicated scientists, meteorologists, and ocean experts, particularly from the National Weather Service, is a reckless decision that puts American lives at risk, undermines critical climate research now and in the future, and threatens the economic well-being of communities across the nation.

NOAA's work is the backbone of public safety and economic resilience. The agency's accurate and timely weather forecasting is the first line of defense against hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and severe storms. Without NOAA's real-time data and predictive models, emergency responders are left without the critical information they need to respond to impending disasters, putting millions at risk. For example, the 2020 Labor Day wildfires in Oregon, which burned more than one million acres and forced tens of thousands to evacuate, demonstrated the life-or-death importance of precise weather modeling.² NOAA's meteorologists were instrumental in providing critical early warnings that saved lives—warnings that are now endangered by these irresponsible cuts.

Beyond public safety, NOAA is an economic engine for industries that depend on reliable weather and climate data. The U.S. commercial fishing industry generated an estimated \$321 billion in 2022 and supported more than 2.3 million jobs. They rely on NOAA's oceanographic assessments and climate predictions to sustain operations.³ In 2024, NOAA's drought monitoring and seasonal forecasts helped American farmers save crops when nearly 37 percent of the country was confronting extreme drought.^{4,5} Importantly, the tourism and outdoor recreation

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/02/27/noaa-nws-mass-firings-trump-administration/>

² <https://wildfire-auth.oregon.gov/Documents/DMTF%20After%20Action%20Report.pdf>

³ <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2024-07/FEUS-2022-v04-0.pdf?>

⁴ <https://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/s3/2024-11/Impacts-Briefing-Agriculture-2024.pdf>

⁵ https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/SectorSheet_agriculture_Final_201812%20%281%29.pdf

Congress of the United States
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industries need NOAA's ability to predict and mitigate extreme weather events. Gutting NOAA's workforce jeopardizes these industries as well.

The assertion that these layoffs will somehow improve "efficiency" is not only misleading but outright dangerous. Efficiency is not only measured in dollars saved but more importantly in lives protected and disasters mitigated. NOAA saves money and American lives. In 2020, NOAA's hurricane forecasting saved approximately \$5 billion per major hurricane landfall.⁶ NOAA's mission is to provide accurate, science-driven information that helps communities prepare for and respond to environmental threats. A reduction in personnel cripples the very infrastructure that Americans depend on to withstand climate-driven catastrophes.

Given the gravity of this situation, we demand immediate and comprehensive responses to the following questions:

1. What specific criteria and assessments were used to determine the necessity and scope of these layoffs, and what alternative cost-saving measures were considered?
2. What evaluations have been conducted to understand the potential consequences of these layoffs on public safety, particularly concerning severe weather forecasting and emergency response?
3. How do you justify these layoffs in light of NOAA's significant contributions to the national economy, including the agriculture, fisheries, and tourism sectors?
4. With this significant reduction in staff, what measures are being implemented to guarantee that NOAA can maintain its current level of service and fulfill its mission without interruption?
5. Were industry stakeholders, state governments, and local communities consulted prior to executing these layoffs? If so, what feedback was received, and how was it incorporated into the decision?
6. Why was there no transparency and prior notification to Congress regarding these severe workforce reductions in a federal agency of such national importance?

⁶ <https://www.nber.org/digest/202409/value-improving-hurricane-forecasts>

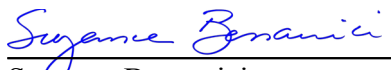
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7. To what extent are these layoffs aligned with the objectives outlined in Project 2025, which advocates for the privatization of certain NOAA functions?
8. What are the long-term plans for NOAA's core operations? Is there an intention to outsource or privatize critical services that are important to Americans?
9. What provisions are in place to support the displaced employees, and is there a plan to rehire or replace critical staff to prevent service disruptions?
10. Have all legal and contractual obligations been met in the execution of these layoffs, and how does the Department plan to address any potential legal challenges arising from this action?

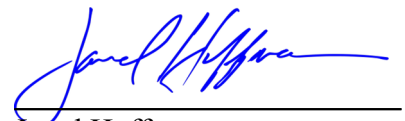
The abrupt and ill-considered purging of NOAA's workforce is an affront to the dedicated public servants who work tirelessly to protect our nation's economy and natural resources, and to the people, industries and communities that rely on the information NOAA provides. We demand an immediate halt to these workforce reductions, reinstatement of employees terminated in these mass layoffs, and a full review of the decision-making process that led to this reckless action.

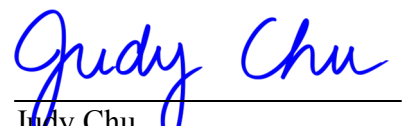
We expect your prompt and detailed response to the questions outlined above no later than March 14, 2025. The safety and economic stability of millions of Americans depend on it.

Sincerely,

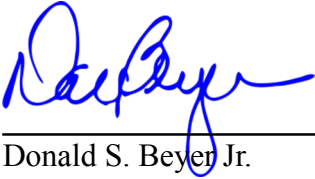

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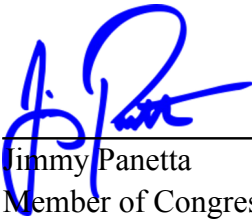
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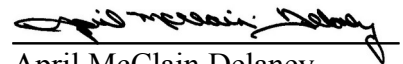
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
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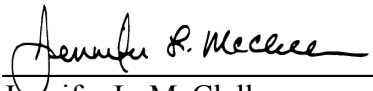
Chellie Pingree
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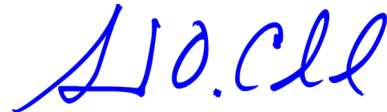
Jennifer L. McClellan
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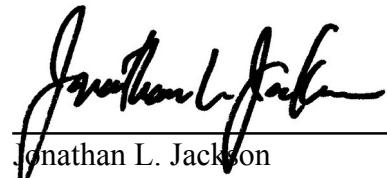
Andrea Salinas
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Salud Carbajal
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Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress

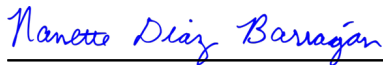
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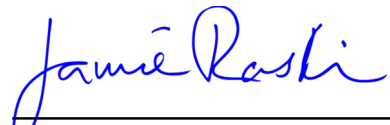
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Congress of the United States
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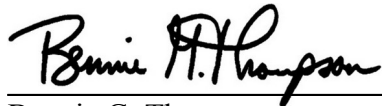
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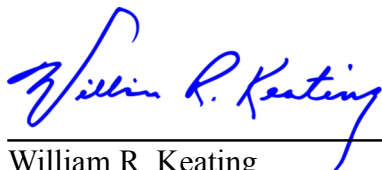
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Congress of the United States
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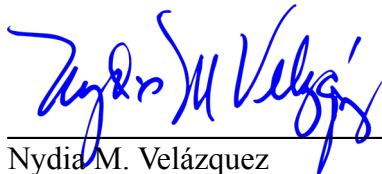
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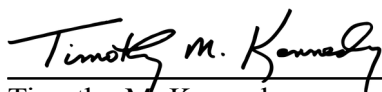
George Whitesides
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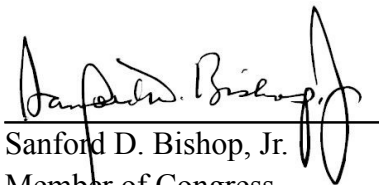
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Congress of the United States
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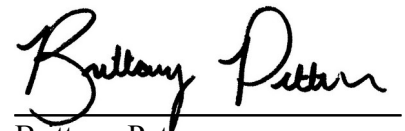
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Mikie Sherrill
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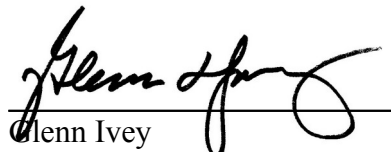
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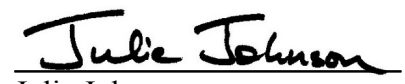
Glenn Ivey
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Julia Brownley
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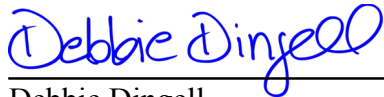


Scott H. Peters
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Member of Congress

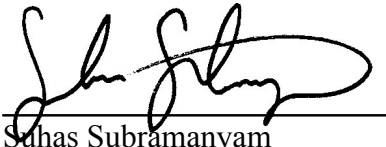
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Laura Friedman
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Rick Larsen
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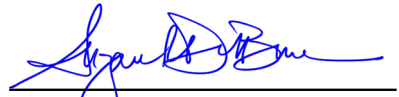
Frederica S. Wilson
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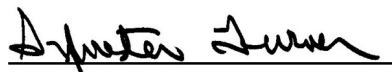
John Garamendi
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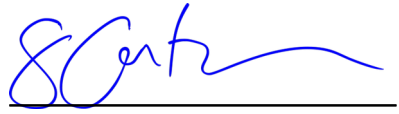
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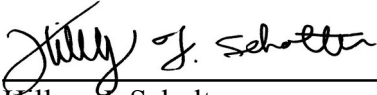


Sylvester Turner
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Sean Casten
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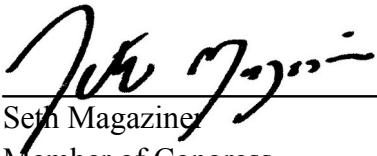
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Val Hoyle
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Kim Schrier, M.D.
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Andre Carson
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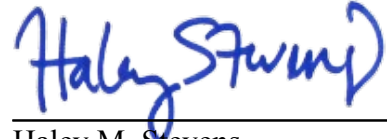


Jason Crow
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Sara Jacobs
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Haley M. Stevens
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Jahana Hayes
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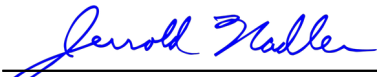
Dave Min
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Pramila Jayapal
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Lizzie Fletcher
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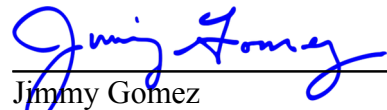
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Congress of the United States
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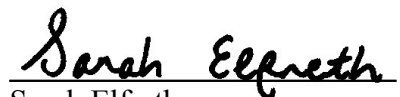
Gwen S. Moore
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Jim Costa
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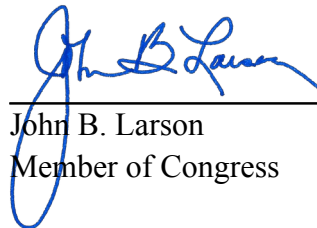
Mark Takano
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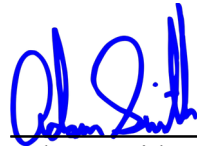


John B. Larson
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Congress of the United States
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Norma J. Torres
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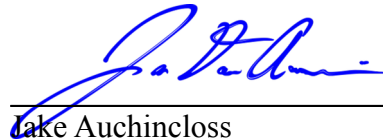
Shontel M. Brown
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Teresa Leger Fernández
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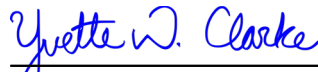
Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



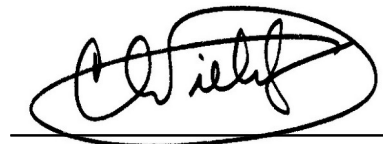
Dwight Evans
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Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

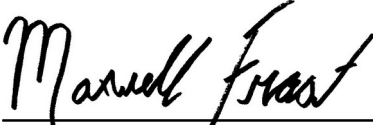


James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Cleo Fields
Member of Congress

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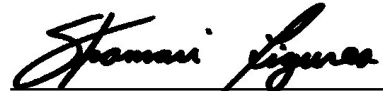
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



Robert J. Menendez
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
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Shomari Figures
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Janelle S. Bynum
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Maggie Goodlander
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Maxine Dexter
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