

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

September 15, 2020

Dr. Neil Jacobs

Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction
Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Ave. NW, Rm. 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Jacobs:

We are writing to raise concern about the irresponsible installation of Dr. David Legates as the new Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction. Dr. Legates' continued denial of human-driven climate change and its devastating impacts degrades the scientific integrity and derails the mission of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). With the daily realities we face as a country and global community, it is shameful that such a thing as a "climate denier" still exists and extremely problematic that one be appointed to a prominent position in NOAA.

Dr. Legates has testified before our Committee downplaying or downright refuting the anthropogenic drivers of our current climate crisis. He stated: "Climate has always changed, and weather is always variable due to complex, powerful natural forces. No efforts to stabilize the climate can possibly be successful." He went on: "...transition[ing] from fossil fuels to so called clean energy to protect us from climate change is a recipe for personal and economic disaster that will have virtually no impact on the Earth's climate." NOAA's own data, compiled over the 50 years of the agency's existence, points to exactly the opposite. Specifically, the third National Climate Assessment coauthored by NOAA stated "Global climate is changing, and this is apparent across the United States in a wide range of observations. The global warming of the past 50 years is primarily due to human activities, predominantly the burning of fossil fuels."¹ Furthermore, the increase in frequency and severity of extreme events that are exacerbated by climate change are well-documented, particularly by NOAA.² Nowhere is the connection between human-driven climate change and extreme climate events more clearly exemplified than the current fire and drought conditions in the West, and the hurricanes and flooding in the Southeast and Gulf of Mexico.

Dr. Legates' appointment is an extreme risk to the American public and an insult to the quality science and scientists at NOAA. This is yet another example of a disturbing trend in the infusion

¹ <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/climate-information/climate-change-and-variability>

² <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/news/changes-heat-waves-cold-waves-floods-and-droughts-united-states>

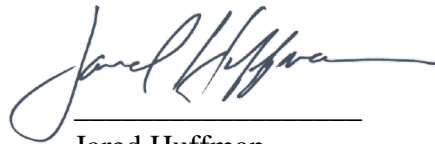
of a political agenda into science. Dr. Legates has gone on the record in opposition to sound science strictly for personal gain and the advancement of a political agenda. Such behaviors undermine the scientific integrity at NOAA and should not have a place in your agency.

Lastly, many questions remain about the mechanics of the appointment. It has become clear that the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction is newly created, but it is unclear whether it is a Senate-confirmed position or how it affects the allotment of politically appointed positions within the agency. Please confirm by September 29th, 2020 whether Dr. Legates was hired as a political appointee, if NOAA hired him through a typical government hiring process, or if another hiring process was used. Please contact Lora Snyder, Staff Director for the Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife, should you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
Committee on Natural Resources



Jared Huffman
Chair
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and
Wildlife