

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

January 24, 2017

President Trump,

A number of the individuals you have entrusted with leadership roles on your transition team and nominated for positions in your Cabinet raise serious questions about your commitment to upholding our bedrock environmental laws and protecting the health and safety of the American people in the face of climate change. What has received less attention, however, is the composition of your landing teams at the federal agencies tasked with implementing and enforcing these laws.


Some of us have already written to implore you to keep your promise to “drain the swamp,” and remove those linked to corporate special interests – especially people with deep ties to the fossil fuel industry – from positions of influence over the Department of Interior (DOI), the Department of Energy (DOE), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Unfortunately, the recent revelation that you have selected Kenneth Haapala to serve on your landing team at the Department of Commerce (DOC) stands as further evidence that this promise is hollow.

As the leader of the misleadingly-titled Science and Environmental Policy Project (SEPP), Haapala, who does not hold an advanced degree in any of the natural sciences, has made a career out of denying the science behind climate change and advocating against actions necessary to protect Americans from its worst impacts. This is not surprising, as SEPP is a project of the Heartland Institute, the notorious, dirty energy-backed outfit which in 2012 sponsored a billboard comparing people who accept the reality of climate change to terrorists. However, it is extremely troubling, especially given that DOC contains the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

NOAA is a technical agency that produces world-class science to help businesses, governments, and individuals manage risk and understand the environments where they are operating. NOAA satellites, monitoring stations, and active data collection efforts are the backbone of our weather forecasting, maritime transportation, and disaster preparedness systems. Farmers, fishermen, shipping companies, the outdoor industry, and many others rely on NOAA products to help them make a living. Climate science is an important component of this work, and to deny that fact will put American businesses at a disadvantage and make our country a more dangerous place to live.

Therefore we urge you to remove Mr. Haapala and any others who share his discredited views on climate science from the DOC landing team. He certainly does not understand or appreciate NOAA's mission and therefore is unfit to serve in any capacity that oversees operations or personnel decisions at the agency.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on Natural Resources



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator