

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 25, 2017

The Honorable Donald Trump  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are gravely troubled by reports about the recent directive to all federal agencies to silence communications with the public and Members of Congress. The American people expect an open, transparent and honest government, and your actions are not only contrary to that expectation, they promote a long lasting culture of fear among federal employees and prevent them from following their mission to openly serve the American public. Additionally, these actions undermine trust in our Federal government and do little to support your “drain the swamp” pledge to “make the government honest again.”<sup>1</sup>

According to reports, your Administration’s Beach Team<sup>2</sup> has directed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Departments of Transportation, Agriculture<sup>3</sup>, Health and Human Services and Interior with memos that impose a gag order on career federal employees. These memos instructed employees to, among other things, immediately cease releasing any public-facing documents, ban the release of photos and press releases to the public and terminate the use of social media. According to reports and an emailed memo, EPA employees were instructed to remove the website’s climate change page containing links to scientific research on global warming, and the Beach Team targeted lists of EPA employees with pending speaking engagements for review.<sup>4</sup> In addition, in some instances the Beach Team specifically directed employees not to send any correspondence to public officials, including Members of Congress and state and local officials.

As Members of Congress, we wanted to ensure that you are aware that it against is the law to interfere with federal employees communicating with Congress.<sup>5</sup> It is also against the law

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/trump-pledges-to-drain-the-swamp>

<sup>2</sup> Politico Pro. Trump restricts communications from health agencies. January 24, 2017

<https://www.apnews.com/55d484c19c28463e95c3b7c674d20bab> [https://www.buzzfeed.com/dinograndoni/trump-usda?utm\\_term=.jk05K5jPAB#.dcalx1bPg5](https://www.buzzfeed.com/dinograndoni/trump-usda?utm_term=.jk05K5jPAB#.dcalx1bPg5)

[http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-epa-climatechange-idUSKBN15906G?feedType=RSS&feedName=domesticNews&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Twitter](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-epa-climatechange-idUSKBN15906G?feedType=RSS&feedName=domesticNews&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter)

<sup>3</sup> Reports have since stated that the Department of Agriculture has rescinded the gag order:

<http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/316015-agriculture-department-lifts-order-for-lockdown-on-its-research-arm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.politicopro.com/f/?id=00000159-d107-dc1f-a37d-d95fed210001>

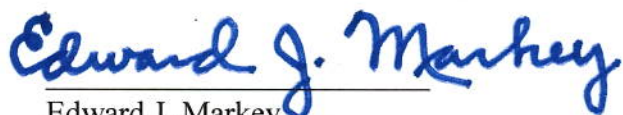
<sup>5</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 7211 and 18 U.S.C. § 1505

to retaliate against career federal officials for following lawful policy directives.<sup>6</sup> These recent actions, combined with your previous attempts as President-elect to solicit names of Energy Department employees who worked on climate change initiatives and State Department officials who worked on women's and gender issues are deeply troubling.

The agencies targeted by this latest directive are responsible for billions of dollars of taxpayer funded public research. This research helps find solutions to problems that affect Americans every day. Targeting the scientists at these agencies and prohibiting them from sharing the results of this research with the broader public is irresponsible and serves only to undermine the integrity and public trust in the federal government. Furthermore, these actions, particularly at the EPA, fly in the face of the Agency's current scientific integrity policy,<sup>7</sup> which prohibits scientists, managers and other Agency leadership from suppressing, altering or otherwise impeding the timely release of scientific findings or conclusions. Previous Republican and Democratic administrations have protected the free flow of information and the sharing of agencies' views with the public.

Given your commitment to the rule of law and peaceful transition of power, we respectfully ask that any directives are immediately reversed and that you ensure that the dedicated federal civil servants of this country receive the respect they deserve and are immediately made aware of their clear protections under the law.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



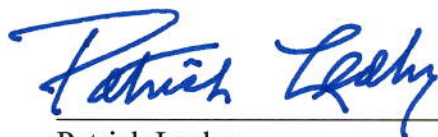
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Tom Udall  
United States Senator

<sup>6</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8)

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-02/documents/scientific\\_integrity\\_policy\\_2012.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-02/documents/scientific_integrity_policy_2012.pdf)



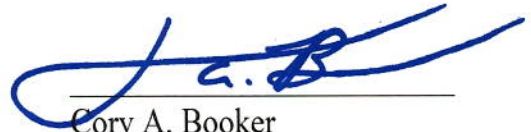
Richard Blumenthal  
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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



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