

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).<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4,5</sup> Importantly, the tourism and outdoor recreation

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

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/SectorSheet\\_agriculture\\_Final\\_201812%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/SectorSheet_agriculture_Final_201812%20%281%29.pdf)

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.<sup>6</sup> 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?

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<sup>6</sup> <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,



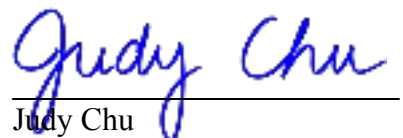
Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress




Ed Case  
Member of Congress



Judy Chu  
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



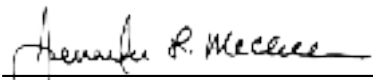
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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



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April McClain Delaney  
Member of Congress



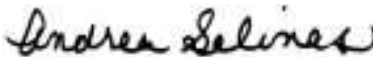
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Jennifer L. McClellan  
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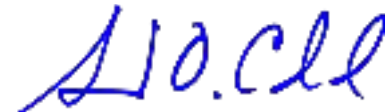
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Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



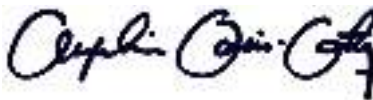
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Andrea Salinas  
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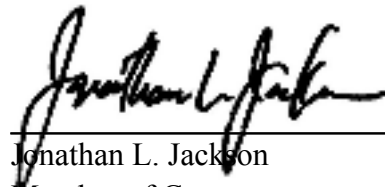
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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
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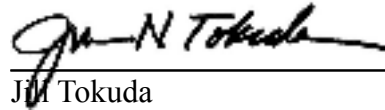
Jonathan L. Jackson  
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Kevin Mullin  
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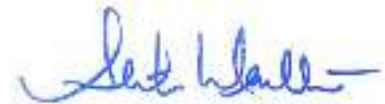
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Jim Tokuda  
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Terri A. Sewell  
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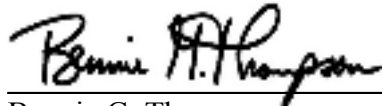
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Maxine Waters  
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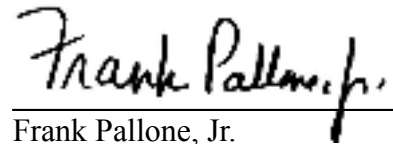
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Mary Gay Scanlon  
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Bennie G. Thompson  
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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
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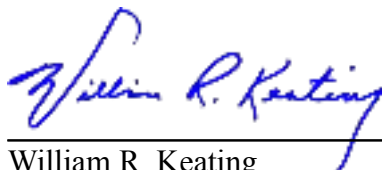
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
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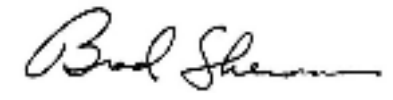
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Ro Khanna  
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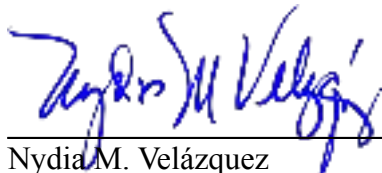
Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



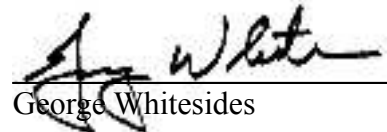
Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



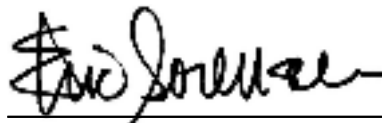
Eleanor Holmes Norton  
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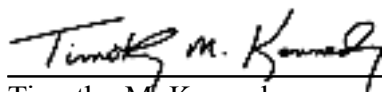
George Whitesides  
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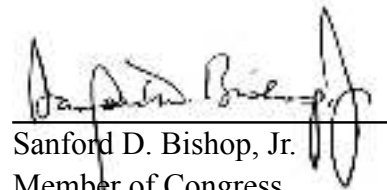
Eric Sorensen  
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
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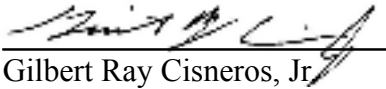


Timothy M. Kennedy  
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
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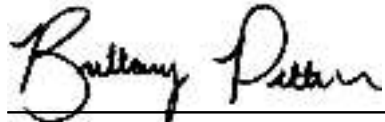
Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.  
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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
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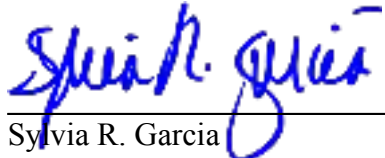
Mikie Sherrill  
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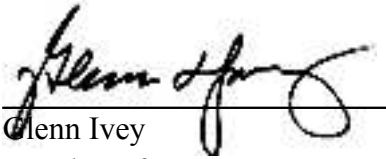
Brittany Pettersen  
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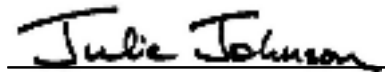
Glenn Ivey  
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Julia Brownley  
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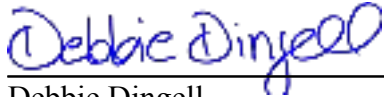
Scott H. Peters  
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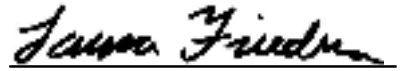
Julie Johnson  
Member of Congress



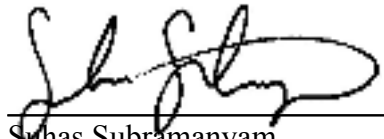
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Debbie Dingell  
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Laura Friedman  
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Rick Larsen  
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Frederica S. Wilson  
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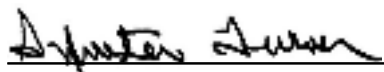
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



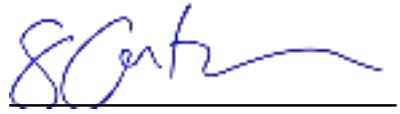
Raja Krishnamoorthi  
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Suzan K. DelBene  
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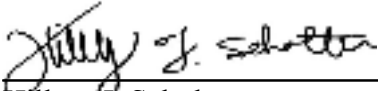


Sylvester Turner  
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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress

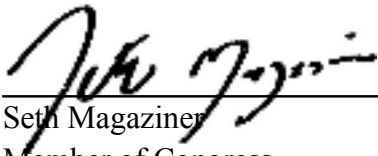
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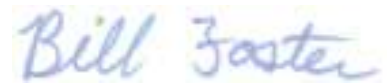
Hillary J. Scholten  
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Bill Foster  
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Stephen F. Lynch  
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Val Hoyle  
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Diana DeGette  
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Andre Carson  
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Jason Crow  
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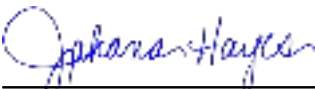
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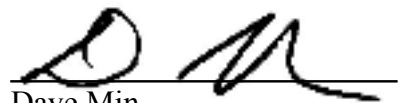
Sara Jacobs  
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Haley M. Stevens  
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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



Dave Min  
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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher  
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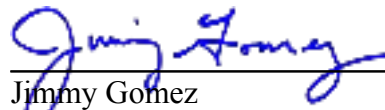
Jerrold Nadler  
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Joe Neguse  
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Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress

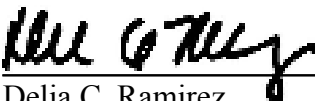
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Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal  
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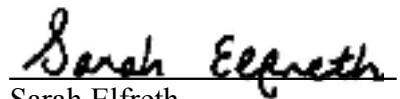
Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



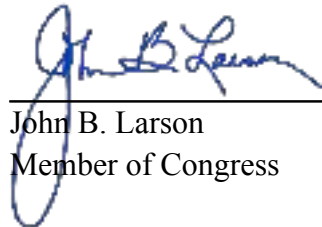
Mark Takano  
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Sarah Elfreth  
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

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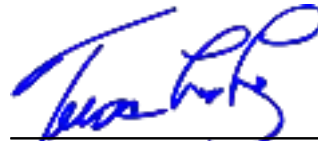
Norma J. Torres  
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Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress



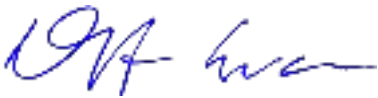
Teresa Leger Fernandez  
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Melanie Stansbury  
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Jake Auchincloss  
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Dwight Evans  
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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

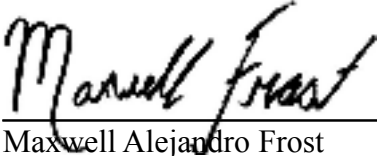


James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

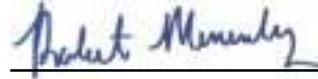


Cleo Fields  
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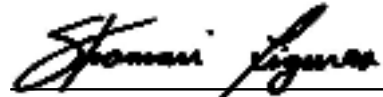
Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
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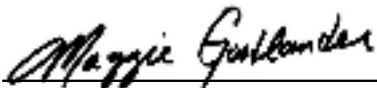
Shomari Figures  
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Janelle S. Bynum  
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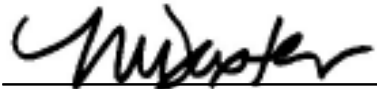
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