

The Honorable Ted Stevens, Chairman
The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, Co-Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

March 17, 2006

Dear Chairman Stevens and Co-Chairman Inouye:

As the Senate Commerce Committee convenes to consider legislation related to innovation and competitiveness, the members of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, which represents all members of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission, strongly recommend that full consideration be given to adopting provisions offered by Co-Chairman Inouye that would contribute significantly toward the goals and objectives of the legislation. The Co-Chairman's provisions directly support efforts aimed at re-establishing our nation's international economic competitiveness by harnessing the immense scientific and educational capacity and potential associated with the federal government's core scientific agencies.

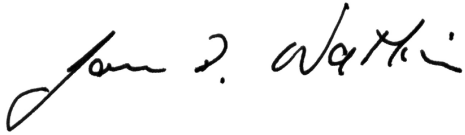
Congress's and the Administration's efforts to enact legislation to implement the recommendations of the National Academies report "Rising Above the Gathering Storm" are focused on rebuilding the nation's core education and research capabilities. We fully support this effort and feel strongly that the scientific resources and expertise residing in the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration (NOAA), the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA), and National Science Foundation (NSF), can make significant contributions towards this national priority. Co-Chairman Inouye's provisions would help guide and focus research and education activities within these agencies, enhancing their collective ability to assist private industry in meeting the economic challenges of the coming decades.

NOAA, NASA, and NSF programs support internal and extramural activities that are essential components of the nation's scientific infrastructure. They have helped to develop and continue to advance our basic understanding of fundamental processes, such as the complex interactions between the oceans and atmosphere. These advances have required cutting-edge research, multidisciplinary approaches, and a workforce with the skill and knowledge to develop new technologies that can handle the increasing amount of data needed to support complex high-resolution or global-scale models. In the effort to maintain our nation's leadership role in the scientific community, it is important for Congress to marshal all of the resources at its disposal to capitalize on the wealth of talent and expertise currently available within all government science-oriented agencies.

The Senate Commerce Committee should adopt Co-Chairman Inouye's proposal to recognize and support federal ocean and atmospheric programs that currently make and have great potential to

significantly advance our nation's research and education capabilities. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is available to assist you and your staff as you consider the vital importance of education and research to our nation's continued economic competitiveness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leon E. Panetta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission