

Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair
Senator Olympia J. Snowe, Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Ocean, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

February 7, 2007

Dear Senators Cantwell and Snowe:

Congratulations to both of you on your reelections and on your appointments as Chair and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard.

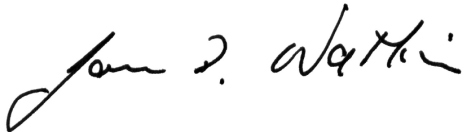
We are writing to you as the Co-chairs of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, a collaborative, bipartisan effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission to catalyze ocean policy reform. We greatly appreciate the continuing support and leadership you have provided on ocean issues, including the letter that you cosigned with eight of your colleagues requesting the Joint Initiative's input on priorities for Congressional action. Our response to that request resulted in a report entitled *From Sea to Shining Sea*, a copy of which is enclosed with this letter.

We understand that you are considering a hearing on the relationship between changes to the global climate and the health of our oceans, which will complement related hearings to be held by the Committee on Environment and Public Works. We feel strongly that this is a timely and critically important area for the Subcommittee to explore. Given the importance of this matter, we would be very interested in testifying at this hearing, and we could make ourselves or one or more of our fellow commissioners available should the opportunity arise.

As you know, it is impossible to manage our oceans effectively without the information necessary to understand the complex processes associated with ocean ecosystems and their interaction with the atmosphere. Nowhere is this more apparent than with climate change. The oceans and climate are deeply linked—the oceans store vast amounts of energy in the form of heat and are a sink for much of the carbon dioxide emitted over the past century. Yet, while sophisticated atmospheric monitoring systems have been in place for decades, only rudimentary systems exist for our oceans. This leaves us with one hand tied behind our back as we try to understand and, more importantly, respond to the impacts of climate change. With leadership from you, Chairman Inouye, Senator Stevens, and others, we can begin to more fully address this situation and put to use important tools such as an Integrated Ocean Observing System to gather critical information and communicate it to decision makers.

Again, congratulations on your respective appointments, and please let us know if we can be helpful with this hearing or with the important work of the Subcommittee in the weeks and months ahead.

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'.

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 extending to the right.

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Chairman, Pew Oceans Commission