



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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August 25, 2017

Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment & Related
Agencies
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment & Related
Agencies
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall,

Appropriations related to environmental stewardship have moral and human dimensions. Adequate funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Interior serves all people who depend on the environment for their livelihood, health, recreation and survival.

Human beings play a critical role in caring for the environment as stewards of our common home. In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminded us of the Old Testament mandates that “tell us to ‘till and keep’ the garden of the world (cf. *Gen 2:15*) [where] ‘keeping’ means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving” (LS 67). The federal government plays a critical role in helping society ‘till and keep’ the bountiful natural resources of the United States for the good of all.

The President’s directive that “all agencies should take appropriate actions to promote clean air and clean water for the American people,” is encouraging. However, the Administration’s proposed funding levels are inconsistent with that expressed intent. The EPA’s proposed budget of \$5.6 billion constitutes a thirty percent reduction from 2017, the largest proposed cut to any federal agency on a percentage basis. The \$1.6 billion funding reduction to the Department of the Interior, which oversees almost one fifth of the nation’s land, also reflects a *de facto* disregard for the government’s stewardship responsibilities.

The House Appropriations Committee markup for EPA funding to \$7.5 billion is a significant improvement on the President’s budget. The House’s markup, which increases funding for the Bureaus of Indian Affairs and Education and air quality grant programs, and preserves funding for the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) and Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which the Administration sought to eliminate, is laudable.

The Senate Appropriations Committee can uphold the House’s support for these programs and also further increase funding to the EPA, the National Parks program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund along with other important Interior agencies. As the U.S. Bishops stated in a recent letter to Congress, “the federal budget is a moral document.” You have an obligation to consider the growing pressures on environmental resources and secure proportionate financial

Letter to Congress

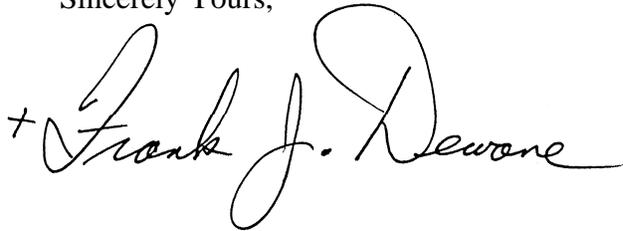
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commitments for the agencies that protect them, particularly for the sake of the poor.

At the beginning of this year, Congress granted the funds necessary for the EPA and Department of the Interior to continue their work in 2017. In the words of Pope Francis, “continuity is essential, because policies related to climate change and environmental protection cannot be altered with every change of government... True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good” (LS 181). Continuing on a steady path of care for creation and service to vulnerable people and their communities is essential.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Frank J. Dewane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane
Bishop of Venice
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development