

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 16, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to follow-up on our earlier letter of April 21, 2017 and encourage you, once again, to nominate well-qualified experts to serve in key positions within the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. More than nine months into your administration you have yet to nominate a science advisor – the longest period without a nominee since 1976 when the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) was formally created in statute. Our country benefits from having science and technology experts weigh in on policy decisions. As members of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, we look forward to receiving and carefully reviewing well-qualified nominees for key positions in OSTP.

In our April letter (attached), we voiced our strong support for the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). For decades, OSTP has advised the president on scientific and technical matters related to national security, the economy, innovation, and many other aspects of American life. Science and technology are central to both overcoming the challenges and capitalizing on the opportunities America faces in the 21st century, and these changes require foresight, planning, and continued U.S. leadership in science and technology. The nation will be well served by having well-qualified experts at OSTP, and the office can provide your administration with expert advice from within government and facilitate discussion with the private sector and academia.

Without adequate OSTP staffing, the country lacks key insights from those with deep experience in science and technology. Unfortunately, delays in nominating key officials have left your administration without this input from OSTP for nearly a year. While many prior presidents have named science advisors prior to taking office, you have now gone more than nine months as president without a nominee. Earlier this year, you set the unfortunate record of the longest post-election period without a nominee for science advisor since 1976, when President Ford signed legislation formally creating OSTP. And beyond its leadership, OSTP continues to operate well below full capacity: recent reports indicate OSTP has fewer than 50 staff, well below its peak of 130 or more in the past.

Meanwhile, numerous issues have surfaced over the past nine months of your presidency that have demanded scientific and technical expertise. In previous administrations, OSTP was central to disaster-mitigation efforts, including hurricanes – but when Hurricanes Irma, Harvey and Maria struck the United States, OSTP lacked key leaders. Scientific and technical input would also have contributed to decisions around climate change, the Iran nuclear deal and North Korea's nuclear program – areas where key decisions have been made over the past nine months

in absence of a science advisor and other officials. And your administration has proposed major cuts to federal science budgets – absent input from Senate-confirmed scientific and technical experts.

We urge you to fill these gaps by nominating well-qualified experts to key science and technology positions within your administration. OSTP leaders must be able to fulfill the Office’s mission of providing accurate, relevant and timely scientific and technological advice to the president and help ensure that federal policy is informed by sound science. They must have strong scientific and technical backgrounds and understand the scientific method and the need for evidence-based science. And they must be nationally recognized and respected experts with connections to the broader scientific and technology communities so that they can be conduits for the scientific and technical expertise of the nation.

In the months since our April letter, we have received neither a reply nor any nominees for key positions at OSTP. We write again to urge you to act. The country stands to gain from policy decisions informed by scientific and technical experts – and as members of the Senate committee of jurisdiction, we pledge to do our part to carefully review well-qualified nominees for these positions.

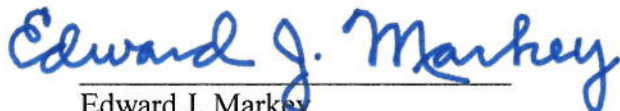
Sincerely,



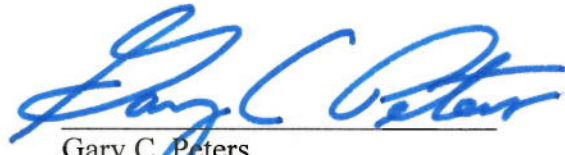
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



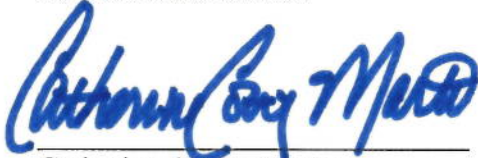
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Cory Booker
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator