

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 24, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We wrote you in May urging you to appoint a Director for the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Specifically, we wrote to you to say,

“We are concerned about the process by which you receive information... Until the OSTP is adequately staffed and the director position filled by a qualified, objective scientist who understands the difference between alternative news peddled on alt-right websites and legitimate well-vetted scientific facts, we fear that you will continue to be vulnerable to misinformation and fake news.”

Since that time, you have continued to operate without the crucial scientific and technological expertise which OSTP has provided to previous presidents. A recent report described the office as being a “ghost town,” and our concerns that you would fall prey to misinformation have continued to be born out. Recent actions and statements by you and your Administration have demonstrated the dire need for scientific expertise in the Trump White House. On December 28, you tweeted:

“In the East, it could be the COLDEST New Year’s Eve on record. Perhaps we could use a little bit of that good old Global Warming that our Country, but not other countries, was going to pay TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS to protect against. Bundle up!”

This tweet betrayed a total ignorance of the difference between climate and weather, and also of the principles of the Paris Climate Agreement, from which you decided to withdraw the United States last year. Scientific experts believe that climate change significantly worsened the numerous natural disasters that afflicted Americans across the country in 2017, claiming thousands of lives and costing hundreds of billions of dollars. Complying with the terms of the Paris Agreement would have required federal outlays estimated at a small fraction of that amount, and would help to mitigate future climate-related disasters.

More broadly, your Administration has repeatedly downplayed or ignored the importance of scientific fact and scientific research. In November, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Director Scott Pruitt insisted that he would go forward with its decision to repeal the Clean Power Plan, the centerpiece to our national strategy to confront climate change, despite his own agency's report that climate change represents a major threat to the United States. You removed climate change from your national security strategy, even though military leaders say that climate change and its geopolitical fallout represent a clear and present danger to this country. And you proposed a budget which would gut funding for scientific and medical research.

We believe that these mistakes might have been avoided if you had availed yourself of the kind of expert advice which previous presidents relied on when making such decisions. We are even more concerned, however, about what might occur if the country faces an unforeseen catastrophe.

We are therefore writing to again urge you to staff your team with qualified scientific advisors.

As former OSTP Director Neal F. Lane noted recently, this office provided crucial information which helped past presidents handle national security crises including 9/11, the anthrax attacks which came after it, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, outbreaks of Zika and Ebola, as well as natural disasters and cyberattacks.

Sound scientific and technology advice is indispensable to US national security and economic growth, and to forming federal policies that help drive the kind of research and technological advances that made this country great. Despite its importance to the safety and prosperity of the country, however, a year into your term, OSTP remains without a Director and has one third as many staff as it had under President Obama.

It is deeply important that you fill the vacant office of OSTP Director as required by law, and fully staff this institution with qualified and knowledgeable officials, as soon as possible.

We thank you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,


Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress


Bill Foster
Member of Congress


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress


Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Jacky Rosen
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress