

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW Washington, DC 20240

Dr. Neil Jacobs
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction, performing the
duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

March 23, 2020

Dear Secretary Bernhardt, Dr. Jacobs, Secretary Chao, Secretary Perdue and Administrator Wheeler:

Given the current health crisis caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), it is imperative that as we focus on stopping its spread that we halt any public comment periods or major policy actions that do not directly impact our efforts to stem this public health emergency. Regulations and policy changes require robust public input and it is clear that such input is not feasible at this time.

We request that the Department of Interior (DOI), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Transportation (DOT), US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) immediately suspend ongoing public comment periods and delay new policy proposals. The goal of the rulemaking program is “to

enable public ease of access to participate in a high quality, efficient and open rulemaking process.” During this pandemic, the quality of the rulemaking process is severely impacted.

As faith organizations we are charged not only to care for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of families and communities but also for the health and wellbeing of God’s creation. As stewards of God’s creation, we have a vested interest in the rulemakings of DOI, EPA DOT, USDA and NOAA. Our communities, who both regularly provide input to such rules and are impacted by their creation, deserve the time and opportunity to participate in the process.

Robust public engagement in federal agency actions is not possible at this time. With the COVID-19 pandemic, our focus, as is the rest of the country’s, is on the urgent need to tend to communities and individuals suffering from this virus.

Please protect the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities by immediately suspending public comment periods and major policy actions that do not directly relate to efforts to stem the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,
Christian Reformed Church office of Social Justice
Church World Service
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Creation Justice Ministries
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
Interfaith Power & Light
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Maryknoll Sisters Eastern Region USA
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sojourners
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice