

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 27, 2010

The Honorable Gary Locke, Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W. Office # 5516
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Locke,

We are writing to you to express our sincere concern and disappointment with the Department's actions regarding personnel and management matters within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Fisheries Enforcement Programs.

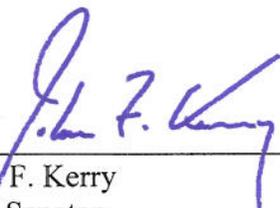
The Department of Commerce Inspector General's series of audit reports on high-level misuse of funds, inappropriate document shredding during an active investigation, and targeting of New England fishermen all represent very serious infractions. In contrast, the recently publicized disciplinary actions on the individuals responsible for these abuses appear to be inconsequential given the significant and negative impact on our fishermen. The reassignment of the former director for NOAA Fisheries Law Enforcement to a fisheries program specialist with nearly the same salary, as well as only personnel proceedings for the others involved, is incomprehensible considering the egregious enforcement practices these employees used to administer the Asset Forfeiture Fund.

We respectfully request that you provide us with a detailed explanation of the Department's reasoning in reassigning these individuals rather than taking more severe action, such as substantially demoting them or terminating their employment. The fishermen who bore the brunt of these abuses deserve to know why these individuals are still employed at NOAA.

We appreciate the efforts that you and the Department have undertaken to fix these abuses going forward by providing transparency and accountability to the enforcement process within NOAA. However, we believe NOAA and the Department of Commerce also must hold these individuals accountable for their past actions.

We look forward to your prompt reply. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry
U.S. Senator



Scott P. Brown
U.S. Senator



Barney Frank
U.S. Congressman



William Delahunt
U.S. Congressman

Cc: The Honorable Jane Lubchenco
Administrator
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