

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 15, 2026

Mr. Brian Stone
Acting Director, National Science Foundation
Randolph Building, 401 Dulany St.
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Acting Director Stone:

We write today to urge you to reverse course on the proposal to dismantle the National Science Foundation's (NSF) vital Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI). Eliminating most of this complex ocean monitoring system threatens the safety of our coastal communities while undermining our nation's ability to monitor coastal environments, marine currents, and extreme weather events.

For the past decade, the OOI has provided critical ocean data. This complex monitoring network – comprised of over 900 unique deep-sea buoys and other instruments – provides insights into changing ecosystem conditions and extreme weather events, which are increasing in frequency and intensity. This publicly available, real-time data is crucial for our coastal communities, fishermen, and nationwide emergency preparedness.

This summer, the world is bracing for a severe El Niño event, a weather pattern known to disrupt regional climates, exacerbate drought and heavy rainfall, and increase heatwaves both on land and in the ocean. The loss of this deep-water observation system would threaten our ability to prepare for and monitor future El Niño events, leaving public safety officials, natural disaster responders, coastal communities, and industries without the vital information they need to safely participate in a wide range of maritime activities.

Federal funding for the NSF and OOI is crucial for the survival of coastal communities and economies. We urge NSF to abide by congressional intent and legal direction, which is clearly to maintain the operation of this cost-effective research system. Additionally, consistent with recommendations provided by the National Academy of Sciences in its Decadal Survey of Ocean Sciences for NSF report, we request that NSF conduct a thorough evaluation of OOI – including engagement with the marine science community and other impacted stakeholders – before any decision is made regarding potential changes to this important program.

The OOI system delivers crucial information about our ocean patterns and weather, reaching and touching all Americans. The effort to dismantle this vital network, jeopardizing decades of prior research, must be reversed in order to prioritize public safety.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



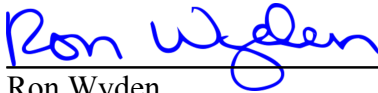
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



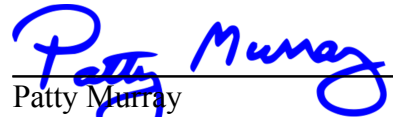
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



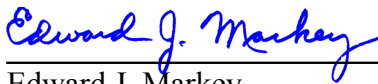
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator