

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 3, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

We write to express our support for U.S. climate diplomacy and to encourage the State Department to continue its engagement on this important global issue. Climate change is a significant environmental challenge that requires global solutions to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and to address the effects already being seen worldwide. For international climate efforts to advance, it is essential that the United States keep a seat at the table.

During your confirmation process, we were encouraged that you expressed support for continued U.S. engagement in international climate change forums. We expect that the Department will maintain this support and would ask for a more detailed explanation of how you will approach continued U.S. cooperation on climate change, including an articulation of the Department's relevant plans, processes, and policies.

The effects of climate change are increasingly apparent in the U.S. and abroad. Sea level rise due to melting ice caps alone threatens millions of lives and trillions of dollars in economic activity in U.S. coastal communities. Consensus science suggests that climate change is affecting the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, like those contributing to the prolonged western wildfire season and California's historic drought. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, in 2016 the U.S. experienced 15 extreme weather events where losses exceeded \$1 billion. Companies like Coca-Cola, Nike, and Johnson & Johnson have begun reporting climate change risks and costs to the Securities and Exchange Commission. U.S. agricultural industry leaders Cargill, Mars, Kellogg's, and General Mills are taking actions to mitigate their risks to climate change, as well as advocating for U.S. participation in the Paris Climate Agreement.

Preventing the worst possible climate impacts is also in the interest of U.S. national security. The Bush Administration's 2008 National Defense Strategy noted the unprecedented scale and speed of climate change's effects on global security. Defense Secretary Hagel called climate change a significant "threat multiplier" upon the release of the 2014 National Defense Strategy.

Combatting climate change presents exciting opportunities for United States competitiveness. Private sector partnerships with U.S. research institutions make the U.S. the world's leader in climate innovation. Global demand for clean energy is evident in the 163 greenhouse gas mitigation commitments parties submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Recognizing the market signals of the Paris Agreement, international energy giants BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Statoil, Total, and BHP are

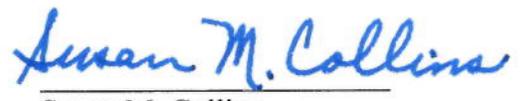
voluntarily applying a “2 degree Celsius stress test” to their business models to better plan for a less carbon intense global economy. U.S. businesses have an advantage in meeting global clean energy demands, a benefit closely linked to American support and engagement in the Paris Agreement process.

Nearly every country has signed the Paris Agreement. Sixty-five percent of those countries have officially joined the Agreement, committing to take action. Even if the U.S. opts out, the rest of world will proceed with mitigation strategies without us and the decisions they make will affect us, regardless of our absence. This necessitates our keeping a seat at the table to ensure that these decisions benefit the U.S. as well as the rest of the world.

We encourage your active engagement in the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to maintain a robust commitment to climate diplomacy. Doing so keeps the U.S. safer and our global alliances secure. We would greatly appreciate you keeping us apprised of your goals and policies to address this looming environmental threat and stand ready to be a resource for you and support you in that effort.

Sincerely,

  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

  
Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator