United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6125

WEBSITE: http://commerce.senate.gov

January 19, 2017

Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
Chairman and Chief Strategy Officer
WL Ross & Co. LLC
1166 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

Dear Wilbur:

In response to my question and your answer at the nomination hearing, I want to add the following.

Our state is ground zero for sea level rise.[i] Since 2006, Miami Beach, for instance, has flooded significantly more often than it used to. In fact, rain-related flooding events in Southeast Florida have increased by 33% and tide-related flooding incidents have risen by a whopping 400%.[ii] And the news isn't getting better:[iii] the rate of sea level rise in the region accelerated to triple the global average of 3 millimeters a year.[iv]

Florida isn't the only state that's at risk. The Eastern seaboard is also experiencing a sea level rise "hotspot." In areas north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, the sea is rising 3 to 4 times faster than the global average.[v] Science also indicates that climate change is already impacting marine fisheries - a resource managed by the Department of Commerce. In 2012, the Gulf of Maine experienced a heat wave, which led to an extended fishing season and record commercial lobster landings.[vi] While this sounds like great news for lobstermen, it actually tanked prices to 70% below normal. Targeted fish stocks will move[vii] and so will invasive species.[viii]

It's clear that climate change poses a grave risk to the economy and the environment of Florida and the nation.[ix] It requires dedicated and urgent attention. Given the vital role the Department of Commerce plays in monitoring, planning for and responding to climate change, I would like a clear commitment that, if confirmed as the Secretary of Commerce, you will support the continuation of climate research and monitoring programs under your jurisdiction.[x] Additionally, I fully expect that you will safeguard the department's scientists from political interference, intimidation and censorship.

Further, I believe you'll agree with me that the Department of Commerce plays an essential role in making communities resilient to extreme weather and climate variability. By helping communities plan and prepare now for climate change impacts, we can save billions of taxpayer dollars in the long run.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and for a prompt and thorough response.

Sincerely,

BILL NELSON
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Chairman

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[i] Leading the Way: Adapting to South Florida's Changing Coastline. *Materials available at* http://www.commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings?ID=ACBA50CF-892A-4838-AAB0-A5AE7B19CAFF.

[ii] Wdowinski, S., Bray, R., Kirtman, B.P., & Wu, Z. (2016). Increasing flooding hazard in coastal communities due to rising sea level: Case study of Miami Beach, Florida. *Ocean & Coastal Management, 126*, 1–8, *available at* http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569116300278.

[iii] Sweet, W. V., Menendez, M., Genz, A., Obeysekera, J., Park, J., & Marra, J. J. 6. In Tide's Way: Southeast Florida's September 2016 Sunny Day Flood, *available at* http://www.ametsoc.net/eee/2015/6_tidal_flood.pdf.

[iv] Cazenave, A., Dieng, H., Meyssignac, B., von Shuckmann, K., Decharme, B., & Berthier, E. (2014). The rate of sea-level rise. Nature Climate Change, 4, 358-361, *available at* http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/v4/n5/full/nclimate2159.html.

[v] Sallenger, A.H., Doran, K.S., & Howd, P.A. (2012). Hotspot of accelerated sea-level rise on the Atlantic coast of North America. Nature Climate Change, 2, 884-888, *available at* http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/v2/n12/full/nclimate1597.html.

[vi] Mills, K.E., Pershing, A.J., Brown, C.J., Chen, Y., Chiang, F., Holland, D.S., Lehuta, S., Nye, J.A., Sun, J.C., Thomas, A.C., & Wahle, R.A. (2013). Fisheries management in a changing climate: Lessons from the 2012 ocean heat wave in the Northwest Atlantic. *Oceanography* 26(2), 191-195, *available at* http://dx.doi.org/10.5670/oceanog.2013.27.

[vii] Sumaila, U.R., Cheung, W.W.L., Lam, V.W.Y., Pauly, D., & Herrick, S. (2011). Climate change impacts on the biophysics and economics of world fisheries. Nature Climate Change, 1, 449-456, *available at* http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/v1/n9/full/nclimate1301.html.

[viii] Cheung, W.W.L., Lam, V.W.Y., Sarmiento, J.L., Kearney, K., Watson, R., & Pauly, D. (2009). Projecting global marine biodiversity impacts under climate change scenarios. Fish and Fisheries, 10, 235-251, *available at* http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-2979.2008.00315.x/abstract.

[ix] *See also*, Ezer, T. and Atkinson, L.P. (2014). Accelerated flooding along the U.S. East Coast: On the impact of sea-level rise, tides, storms, the Gulf Stream, and the North Atlantic Oscillations. Earth's Future, 2, 362–382, *available at* http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/2014EF000252/abstract.

[x] NOAA Scientists have also published extensively on sea level rise. See, for example, NOAA Technical Report NOS CO-OPS 073: Sea Level Rise and Nuisance Flood Frequency Changes around the United States (2014), *available at* https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/publications/NOAA_Technical_Report_NOS_COOPS_073.pdf.