

United States Senate

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COMMITTEES:
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October 26, 2017

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson,

I write today to express my deep concern over Representative Jim Bridenstine's nomination to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Rep. Bridenstine's background makes him an extremely concerning choice to lead this critical agency and its 19,000 diverse employees. Rep. Bridenstine's denial of climate science and consistent opposition to equal rights for women, immigrants, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals should disqualify him from consideration. Given his very public statements and positions, it is clear Rep. Bridenstine would move us backwards not forwards, and I urge you to vote against his nomination.

Rep. Bridenstine has repeatedly rejected the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change. In a June 2013 speech delivered on the floor of the House of Representatives, Rep. Bridenstine repeated the debunked claim¹ that "global temperatures stopped rising 10 years ago."² A March 2013 tweet from Rep. Bridenstine failed to recognize the difference between local weather conditions and the broader planetary climate, a basic scientific concept: "Today's House Science Committee Hearing On Global Warming Was Cancelled Because Of Snow!"³

¹ Mark Fischetti, "No Pause in Global Warming," *Scientific American*, Jan. 4, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/no-pause-in-ocean-warming/>.

² *U.S. House of Representatives Floor Speech*, C-SPAN, June 11, 2013, retrieved from *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUcsAFnwC7k>.

³ Jim Bridenstine, @RepJBridenstine, "Today's Science Committee hearing on global warming was cancelled because of snow!" *Twitter*, Mar. 6, 2013, <https://twitter.com/RepJBridenstine/status/309370680489672704>.

Given that NASA's fiscal year 2018 budget requested \$1.8 billion for Earth-observing and climate science missions,⁴ Rep. Bridenstine's failure to accept fundamental scientific truths about Earth's climate make him an ill-suited and dangerous choice to lead the agency.

Rep. Bridenstine is an outspoken opponent to the rights of LGBTQ individuals, immigrants, and women. In a May 2013 speech, Rep. Bridenstine suggested that LGBTQ individuals were sexually immoral, stating, "Some of us in America still believe in the concept of sexual morality, that sex is intended for one man and one woman within the institution of marriage."⁵ In response to the Supreme Court's marriage equality ruling in 2013, Rep. Bridenstine stated that "the court's decision was a disappointment" and that he would "continue to fight for traditional marriage."⁶ Bridenstine has also been a guest on 16 separate occasions and twice co-hosted *Washington Watch with Tony Perkins*, a daily radio show published by the Family Research Council (FRC), which has been designated by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) as a hate group for its anti-LGBTQ remarks. FRC has stated, "homosexual conduct is harmful to the persons who engage in it and to society at large, and can never be affirmed. It is by definition unnatural, and as such is associated with negative physical and psychological health effects."⁷ Tony Perkins, FRC's President, has declared that gay activists are "intolerant, hateful, vile, spiteful pawns of the Devil."⁸

Rep. Bridenstine has a history of supporting anti-Muslim groups and has consistently defended a number of President Trump's discriminatory and unconstitutional policies on immigration, including the thrice-struck down Muslim Travel Ban.⁹ On seven separate occasions, Bridenstine has appeared on Secure Freedom Radio with Frank Gaffney, the founder of the Center for Security Policy (CSP), a far-right think tank that advocates anti-Muslim views. SPLC considers Gaffney "one of America's most notorious Islamaphobes."¹⁰ CSP has promoted conspiracy theories related to Islam, including suggesting that Representative Andre Carson and Huma Abedin and her family have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. Bridenstine has also spoken at conferences at the David Horowitz Freedom Center (DHFC), a far-right, anti-Islam group that, in

⁴ NASA FY18 Budget Request, <https://www.nasa.gov/news/budget/index.html>.

⁵ Zack Ford, "Oklahoma Congressman: The Left is 'Intolerant' for Wanting Gay Boy Scouts," *Think Progress*, May 23, 2013, <https://thinkprogress.org/oklahoma-congressman-the-left-is-intolerant-for-wanting-gay-boy-scouts-3bb9c4931144/>.

⁶ "In Support of Traditional Marriage," JIM'S BLOG, *Office of Rep. Jim Bridenstine*, July 3, 2013, accessed Oct. 25, 2017, <https://bridenstine.house.gov/media-center/blog-posts/in-support-of-traditional-marriage>.

⁷ "Homosexuality," *Family Research Council*, accessed Oct. 25, 2017, <http://www.frc.org/homosexuality>.

⁸ Kyle Mantyla, "Perkins: Gay Activists Are Intolerant, Hateful, Vile, Spiteful, Pawns of the Devil," *Right Wing Watch*, May 3, 2011, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/perkins-gay-activists-are-intolerant-hateful-vile-spiteful-pawns-of-the-devil/>.

⁹ Aaron Blake, "Whip Count: Here's where Republicans stand on Trump's controversial travel ban," *Washington Post*, Jan. 31, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/01/29/heres-where-republicans-stand-on-president-trumps-controversial-travel-ban/?utm_term=.81901b71a504.

¹⁰ "Frank Gaffney Jr." *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed Oct. 25, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/frank-gaffney-jr>.

their own words, “combats the efforts of the radical left and its Islamist allies to destroy American values and disarm this country as it attempts to defend itself in a time of terror.”¹¹

In 2013, Rep. Bridenstine voted against the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), while claiming that VAWA and its key anti-domestic violence programs “[misallocate] scarce federal resources.”¹² Additionally, after then-candidate Donald Trump’s comments about sexual assault became public in October 2016, Rep. Bridenstine actively downplayed the comments and criticized individuals who condemned them.¹³ On multiple occasions when provided with the opportunity to reject President Trump’s comments, Rep. Bridenstine instead said they amounted to nothing more than “locker room talk.”¹⁴

Since its creation, NASA has played a singular role in American life. The agency has inspired countless young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math, and has stirred curiosity in billions of individuals across the world. Rep. Bridenstine’s denial of fundamental scientific facts and long record of bigoted and hateful statements run counter to this legacy. I urge you and your colleagues on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation to oppose his nomination.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator

¹¹ “About David Horowitz Freedom Center,” *David Horowitz Freedom Center*, accessed Oct. 25, 2017, <http://www.horowitzfreedomcenter.org/about>.

¹² Jim Bridenstine, @RepJBridenstine, “Today’s Science Committee hearing on global warming was cancelled because of snow!” *Twitter*, Feb. 28, 2013, <https://twitter.com/RepJBridenstine/status/307212538129567744>.

¹³ Randy Krehbiel, “Rep. Jim Bridenstine would consider federal appointment if offered by Trump,” *Tulsa World*, Nov. 11, 2016, http://www.tulsaworld.com/news/elections/rep-jim-bridenstine-would-consider-federal-appointment-if-offered-by/article_91615f2f-38da-515e-a97b-c614e2822c37.html.

¹⁴ *The Lead With Jake Tapper*, CNN, Oct. 12, 2017.