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March 8, 2007

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am deeply troubled that the Department of the Interior could be preventing senior arctic officials from discussing climate change and the plight of polar bears on official overseas trips. I have seen copies of two foreign travel clarification documents on agency letterhead that state, "This traveler understands the administration's position on climate change, polar bears, and sea ice and will not be speaking on or responding to these issues."

I urge the administration to reverse the policy evident in this memo and replace it with a policy of commitment to open dialogue. Additionally, as a member on the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, with jurisdiction over climate-change issues, I would like to know specifics of any rules implemented or briefings given to U.S. officials regarding their discussions on the "administration's position on climate change, polar bears and sea ice."

These memoranda confirm that the administration continues to prevent taxpayer-funded scientists from freely discussing issues related to global warming, even though the president has acknowledged that earth is warming due primarily to human activities. In this instance, the administration is asking scientists to refrain from discussing the issues at the heart of what is threatening the polar bear – sea ice and global warming.

I am confident Americans will be on the cutting edge when it comes to addressing global warming. But innovators, entrepreneurs and policymakers need scientific integrity, now more than ever, to develop new technologies and create sound policies. I hope you will consider a new policy of openness, and I look forward to hearing from you on scheduling a time for a briefing.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Inslee".
JAY INSLEE
Member of Congress