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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6175

March 11, 2014

Members of the Louisiana Congressional Delegation
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Cassidy, Boustany, Scalise, Fleming, and McAllister:

Thank you for your letter of February 11, 2013 outlining your specific concerns with the nomination of Rhea Suh to be Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the U.S. Department of Interior (Interior). You specifically requested that, as a senator representing the State of Louisiana, I oppose this nominee because she holds positions that are at odds with the best interests of our state.

As Ranking Member of the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, I led eight members in opposing Ms. Suh's nomination when it was considered in Committee. I remain concerned that Ms. Suh served in a senior role at Interior over the past five years helping to implement, in her words, "every single one of the major policy priorities…" During that time, Interior issued the job killing moratorium on energy development in the Gulf. Accordingly, I could not in good conscience support her nomination. Such a vote would represent support for the drilling moratorium and President Obama's policies that have seriously hurt our domestic energy development over the past five years.

Your letter also referenced the importance of Committee votes because of the rules change in the Senate that was forced through by the vast majority of Democratic senators. The vote to change the rules so that President Obama could more easily force nominees into key policy positions allows the President to push his agenda that undermines Louisiana's economy. It also acts as a detriment to our efforts to effectively negotiate with this Administration on concessions we may obtain in return for confirming nominees.

Because of the rules change, the best opportunity to stop a nominee comes in Committee. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, where Senator Landrieu now serves as the Chair, represents the best opportunity to block President Obama's agenda to halt traditional energy production. The most significant impact we can make to stand up for Louisiana is to oppose Department of Interior nominees who want to further that job killing agenda, starting with Rhea Suh. Unfortunately, Senator Landrieu has stated she is supporting Rhea Suh, and will hold a hearing to support her nomination as one of her very first actions as Chair of the Senate Energy Committee.

As your colleague and fellow Louisianian who understands how vital energy production is to our State's economy, I appreciate your letter and the request you have made. I am happy to inform you that I will object at all junctures to the confirmation of Rhea Suh for the position of Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Sincerely,

David Vitter

David Vitter
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works

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