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The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500-0004

Dear Mr. President:

I write today to implore you to personally reconsider a recent decision by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell rejecting a life-saving road in the remote Aleutian Islands of Southwest Alaska. The core issue in this dispute is one of simple justice: are potential or minor risks to birds more important than the lives of the residents of the native village of King Cove? The lack of reliable air service to the village has already resulted in 18 recorded deaths, including the deaths of medevac personnel during failed rescue operations. Secretary Jewell's decision is callous and completely disregards the health, safety, and well-being of some of Alaska's indigenous people, the Aleuts of King Cove.

For background, Subtitle E of Public Law 111-11 authorizes a land exchange for the purpose of constructing a limited-use road from King Cove, where mountainous terrain prohibits the construction of a suitable airport, to the all-weather airport at Cold Bay. Without road access, or reliable air travel, village residents are often forced to make do without adequate healthcare. The 2009 law provided the Secretary of the Interior with the singular opportunity to have the final say on this decision, and unfortunately, Secretary Jewell – on the day before Christmas Eve – decided that the well-being of birds mattered more than the lives of the residents of King Cove.

From our time together in the U.S. Senate, I remember your compassion and interest in positively impacting the lives of Native Americans throughout our great nation. Your desire to improve access to healthcare for all Americans is well known. This is a perfect opportunity for this administration to achieve both goals with a single decision. Both Secretary Jewell and Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn have ignored the directive outlined in former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's memorandum of March 21, 2013, bearing the title *Izembek National Wildlife Refuge/Land Exchange Road Corridor* (Secretary's Memorandum), which instructed this decision to be made "pursuant to the unique trust relationship" that the Federal Government has with the Aleut, as it has with all Native peoples of this country. The Aleut people have lived on the Aleutian Islands for thousands of years, yet their health and wellbeing continues to be placed at risk because of a relatively new land classification that the federal government imposed upon them.

Mr. President, I ask that you review Secretary Jewell's decision and direct her to overturn it. The Aleut people of King Cove deserve access to the same medical care that the rest of the country is afforded. I know you feel strongly about access to adequate healthcare, and this is truly an opportunity to right an injustice and allow these Alaskans to live without the fear that inclement

weather could cut them off from emergency medical services and turn a treatable condition into a life-threatening emergency. While it is true that many rural Alaska residents have limited access to healthcare, we have the opportunity to change that in *this* instance, where just 10 miles of a single-lane, non-commercial road would ensure that access. I truly hope that your Administration will reverse this decision against the residents of King Cove. I expect you will agree with me that, in this case, the choice is an easy one – choose the *people* of King Cove.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski", with a large, stylized initial "L".

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator