

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 8, 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment  
and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment  
and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
125 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We are writing to request critical funding to address white nose syndrome (WNS), a deadly disease affecting hibernating bats. Named for the white fungus that appears on the muzzle and other body parts of hibernating bats, WNS is associated with extensive mortality of bats in the eastern and Midwestern United States. First documented in New York in the winter of 2006, WNS has spread rapidly through 16 states, with cases detected as far west as Oklahoma. More than one million bats in the Northeast and Canada have been killed by WNS and some caves have seen 90 to 100 percent of bats killed.

Bats play a critical role in our nation's agricultural economy. According to a recent study, the pest control services provided by insect-eating bats in the United States save American farmers somewhere between \$3.7 billion and \$54 billion a year, most likely about \$22.9 billion. This is a huge savings no one notices as long as our bat populations flourish, however, bat populations are severely threatened. Particularly at risk is the most common species, the little brown bat, which each day eats much of its body weight in insects, many of them harmful to crops. At the current rate of loss, bat population recovery is unlikely for decades or possibly centuries.

In order to stave off the rapid spread of WNS, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is leading an extensive network of state and federal agencies, tribes, organizations, institutions and individuals in working cooperatively to investigate the source and cause of bat deaths associated with WNS. They are also working to develop management strategies to minimize the impact of WNS. As WNS moves west, new agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management and National Forest Service will be drawn in and, with the high proportion of public land in the West, the federal burden for WNS will increase exponentially.

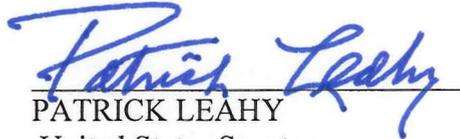
This is a wildlife crisis of unprecedented scale, and the Department of Interior needs additional resources to fully address this emergency. We must make sure there are sufficient resources to combat the spread of this disease and properly carry out the monitoring, management and research needed to stop WNS. The Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management will each play a role in this effort and the combined total need for the WNS response for these agencies in

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Fiscal Year 2012 has been estimated to be \$10.8 million. We believe that including this level of funding is a prudent investment that will help prevent more serious damage while avoiding billions of dollars in agriculture losses and pest damage in the future.

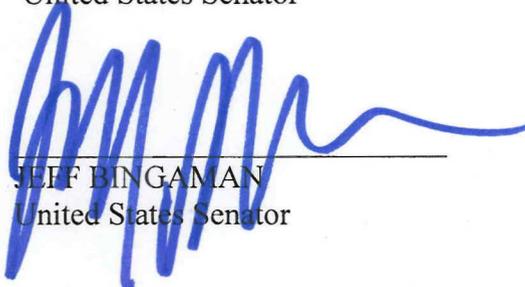
Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator



FRANK R. LAUTENBERG  
United States Senator



JEFF BINGAMAN  
United States Senator



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN  
United States Senator



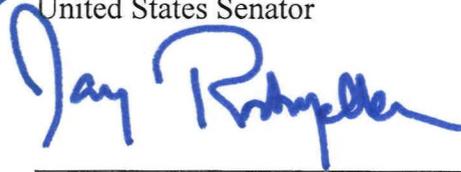
KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND  
United States Senator



JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN  
United States Senator



ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator



JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV  
United States Senator



BERNIE SANDERS  
United States Senator



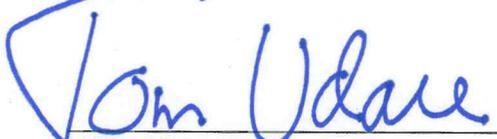
CHARLES E. SCHUMER  
United States Senator



JIM WEBB  
United States Senator



RON WYDEN  
United States Senator



TOM UDALL  
United States Senator