July 15, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell Majority Leader United States Senate 317 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid Minority Leader United States Senate 522 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

RE: Filling the Supreme Court Vacancy

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid:

It has been more than 120 days since President Obama nominated Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. Yet, the Senate has failed to hold a hearing on Judge Garland's nomination, nor has it held a vote. On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we call on the United States Senate to commit to doing its job by holding an up or down vote on the President's nominee.

In November 2012, the American public gave the President another four-year term that does not expire until noon on January 20, 2017. In doing so, Americans entrusted in President Obama the right and responsibility to fill any vacancies on the Supreme Court through the entirety of his term. To ensure a fully functioning legal system, the Senate must do its job by carrying out its role in this process. There is ample precedent for a nominee to be confirmed in election years, even when the Senate and White House are controlled by opposite political parties. Willful obstructionism is simply a dereliction of duty, and not what the American people expect from their elected representatives.

For the protection of our air, water, wildlife and lands, a strong and intact judicial system is as important as ever. In an era when powerful interests who profit from pollution have an unprecedented level of access and influence, it is imperative that we have functioning courts – particularly our nation's highest – to make sure the interests of all Americans are addressed. With so many critical issues expected to come before the Supreme Court, including those dealing with public health and environmental safeguards, this is not the time to hobble our judiciary with extended vacancies caused by political gamesmanship.

Sincerely,

Cindy Shogan

Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League

Kierán Suckling

Executive Director, Center for Biological Diversity

Robert Wendelgass

President and CEO, Clean Water Action

Jamie Rappaport Clark

President and CEO, Defenders of Wildlife

Trip Van Noppen

President, Earthjustice

Michael Noble

Executive Director, Fresh Energy

Erich Pica

President, Friends of the Earth

Mark Magaña

President, GreenLatinos

Annie Leonard

Executive Director, Greenpeace USA

Gene Karpinski

President, League of Conservation Voters

Rhea Suh

President, Natural Resources Defense Council

Catherine Thomasson, MD

Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility

Robert Weissman

President, Public Citizen

Michael Brune

Executive Director, Sierra Club

Ken Berlin

President and CEO, The Climate Reality Project

Peggy M. Shepard Executive Director, WE ACT for Environmental Justice