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Ms. Lisa Jackson, Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Federal Building,
1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Room 3000
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

I am writing to request that your agency consider providing grant assistance to the Fairbanks North Star Borough in Alaska to aid in its efforts to meet new particulate matter (PM 2.5) standards that your agency is imposing on the borough and the nearby City of Fairbanks.

City and Borough officials both have been in contact with EPA Region 10 officials in Seattle and others in Washington, DC seeking financial aid – at least \$1 million – to fund the last of a \$3 million program designed to encourage residents in the Fairbanks North Star Borough to buy new or to repair solid-fuel burning devices to reduce particulate matter. Unfortunately, the Mayor of the Borough and other officials have been told that EPA has no funds available for such assistance.

I find the EPA's response disheartening and difficult to accept. On October 18th, the Department released \$6.6 million in grants for research into black carbon issues to a number of American universities. Earlier in the summer the EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs went out with a grant solicitation offering up to \$1 million for work in the Russian Arctic assessing and mitigating black carbon generation. Then, on October 18th, the agency issued an additional \$219,000 in grants for environmental education efforts in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska with the money in Alaska going to promote environmental education in southwest Alaska. How is it that the Department has funds to promote environmental education, but does not have funds to help reduce soot and particulate matter that the agency finds have direct and significant human health and environmental impacts in its own rule implementing the stricter PM 2.5 standards?

As I'm sure you noticed during your visit to Fairbanks in summer 2010, the community is working hard to replace old, inefficient wood and coal-fired stoves and older model hydronic heaters and boilers with modern devices that promote complete combustion and reduce air emissions. The borough has invested in not just the wood stove program, but also a firewood exchange program to address the additional emissions generated by use of unseasoned firewood - a common practice when citizens attempt to reduce high heating bills by supplementing oil heat with fireplaces and woodstoves in an area where winter temperatures often hit -40 to -50 degrees Fahrenheit.

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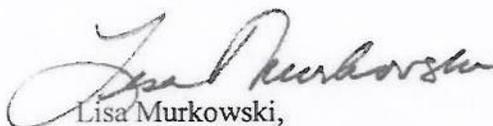
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At a time of tightening federal budgets, it is extremely painful for me to see your agency favoring foreign nations over American citizens in the provision of grant aid to meet tightening air standards, especially when the agency has provided similar PM 2.5 compliance grants to a number of other American cities in past years. I hope the agency will reconsider and promptly provide financial grant assistance to help the Fairbanks North Star Borough meet pending tighter air standards from coming FY 12 funds. If the agency absolutely cannot, I hope you will work with the borough and city to delay implementation of any penalties should the area fail to meet the new PM 2.5 standards when enforcement deadlines could take effect in 2013.

In a community where electricity currently costs more than twice the national average, where EPA has been extremely slow in permitting the restart of the Healy Clean Coal plant -- electricity from which will be vital if wood-fired heating is to be replaced with supplemental electric heat -- and in a community that faces the coldest winter temperatures in urban America, I hope that your agency will show greater awareness of the extreme economic hardship that your new air emissions enforcement standards may cause. I appreciate your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski,
U.S. Senator, Alaska

cc: Dennis J. McLerran, Regional Administrator, EPA Region 10