JET PROPULSION LABORATORY,
Pasadena, Calif., December 4, 1967.

Hon. JOHN V. TUNNEY,
House of Representatives,
Longworth House Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN TUNNEY: The matter of environmental control with which you have concerned yourself in HR 13211 is unquestionably one of vital and immediate concern. If we and following generations are to continue to utilize the national resources for industrial, agricultural, domestic and recreational purposes, and if we are to do this in a manner which will enrich our lives as citizens, we must take the appropriate steps to prevent degradation and wasteful exploitation of our environment. There are legal and technical means today to prevent the most gross fouling and pollution of the nations resources, but there are almost no mechanisms to anticipate or control the more subtle, but equally wasteful effects from interaction within an ecosystem. Even where individuals and organizations foresee adverse consequences for their locale, they find no mechanism to deal with their problem on a regional basis—the only basis which encompasses all the detriments. Thus, there is a need to provide local authorities and advisory bodies with scientific and technical information to support their efforts in developing and maintaining a clean, healthful environment for use and enjoyment of their citizens. This legislation is the necessary first step. The problems I see are threefold: one of education, one of organization, one of authority.

Ecology, while a familiar concept to scholars, is not a household word. It correctly identifies the scientific discipline which deals with environmental problems towards which this legislation is directed, but the public is generally not aware of the strong interactions and secondary influence of the various elements that create an ecosystem.

This should not detract from the wisdom of an educated legislature examining the problems and finding solutions. I point this out to direct your attention to the need for public information in this area. Exologists, like rocket scientists prior to the passing of the Space Act that created NASA, understand their particular problems but in isolation from the public. Regrettably, the strongest motivation for public attention is a national crisis. It is fortunate, of course, that we have not yet had an environmental crisis. In fact, we may never have an environmental crisis with impact comparable to Sputnik I. It is in the nature of environmental decay that the healthy state is lost in relatively small bits and pieces until the damage comes to public attention after it outweighs our capacity for corrective action. This complicates the task of arousing the general state of public complacency before the national need is even more acute. Perhaps, then, one of the major jobs of the Committee would be to assess the methods of public education in this area.

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