

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 25, 2009

The Honorable Bobby Jindal
Governor of Louisiana
Baton Rouge, LA 70804
Via fax: (225) 342-7099

Dear Governor Jindal:

I write to take issue with your comments on national television last night following President Obama's speech regarding federal spending on volcano monitoring. Specifically, you listed "volcano monitoring" in a series of projects you consider "wasteful spending."

Volcano monitoring is a matter of life and death in Alaska. The science of volcano monitoring and the money needed to fund it is incredibly important in our state and could affect the economic well-being of other states and countries because of Alaska's key role in international commerce.

In December 1989, Alaska's Mount Redoubt had a serious eruption that caused a Boeing 747 to lose power in all four engines with hundreds of passengers on board. Fortunately, the aircraft was able to restart and land safely, but damage to the airliner exceeded \$80 million. Obviously, had the aircraft not been able to restart its engines, the result would have been catastrophic.

Alaska's largest international airport in Anchorage is one of the world's busiest cargo airports, with more than 600 wide-body cargo jets delivering millions of dollars of goods between Asia, North America and Europe each week. Any interruption of that traffic by a volcanic eruption could be felt in Tokyo, New York or even Baton Rouge.

Currently, the Alaska Volcano Observatory monitors 31 active Alaskan volcanoes and works closely with other federal, state and municipal agencies to ensure public safety and minimize disruptions. Eruptions often spew curtains of ash miles into the air that impact communities hundreds of miles downwind, causing severe health consequences for our citizens. When there is a significant eruption, those with respiratory challenges must stay indoors.

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For Alaska and our country, monitoring volcanoes is important business. The more we know about what might happen, the better our citizens and industries can plan for the potential hazard. Feel free to contact my office so we can provide you with further information regarding this important subject.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Begich', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Begich
U.S. Senator