Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK) is circulating a Dear Colleague letter in the Senate, asking his fellow senators to sign on in support of an additional (over FY10) $528 million that NOAA needs in FY11 to develop the Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS) and prevent a gap in the nation's polar-orbiting satellite coverage. As you know, this system is indispensable for weather forecasts, military operations, research data, commercial aviation, and emergency search-and-rescue -- not to mention the provision of data and services to nearly every sector of the economy, including the agriculture, transportation, recreation and tourism, forestry, and energy. Should a data gap occur, the nation would have to rely on data from international partners.

We understand that there are competing priorities in the FY11 NOAA budget, but we want to make you aware of this letter because it asks for JPSS funding that is an anomaly above FY10 levels -- in other words, funding that is added rather than taken from other programs. The sponsoring senators have made clear that they do not want other programs raided to fund JPSS in FY11.

*Please take a moment this week to call your two U.S. Senators, introduce yourself and let them know you are a constituent. Ask for the Legislative Assistant (LA) in the office who deals with science issues and tell him/her (or whomever answers the phone) to "Please sign on to the Dear Colleague being circulated by Senator Begich supporting full funding for NOAA's Joint Polar Satellite System in FY11."* You can find the phone numbers for your two U.S. Senators at http://senate.gov/ or you can email or call me (mhenry at ucar.edu) and I would be more than happy to look up the numbers for you.

You may also offer to send a copy of the Dear Colleague Letter via email to your senators. Attached is what is being circulated by Sens. Begich and Kerry. The deadline for senators to sign is close of business next Wednesday, March 30.

Thanks very much in advance for your consideration of this request.