



# Chairman Hal Rogers

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## House Committee on Appropriations

**Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Hearing: Environmental Protection Agency**

**March 22, 2016**

**Opening Statement as Prepared**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for yielding. Administrator McCarthy, thank you for being here today.

The Environmental Protection Agency plays an important role in ensuring that Americans are able to live and work in healthy communities, safeguarded from harmful pollutants and environmental threats. Your agency is tasked with providing people all across the country with access to clean air and water, and doing so by promulgating regulations grounded in the laws enacted by Congress. Over the last 45 years, the EPA has created numerous programs that deliver much needed assistance to the rural communities in my District in Eastern Kentucky. Grants administered by your agency have helped these small towns reduce the incidence of radon-related lung cancer, improve wastewater systems, and provide clean drinking water in places where infrastructure is lacking. I remain supportive of these programs and appreciate your partnership in these efforts.

However, recent events call into question whether the EPA is serving as a responsible steward of our environmental resources and taxpayer dollars. Just last summer, 3 million gallons of toxic waste were released into the Animas River under EPA's watch. Today, almost eight months later, EPA has still not responded to claims made by local residents who were impacted by the spill. I am perplexed as to why the agency is not working more diligently to restore this egregious breach of the public's trust, particularly as you make the case to the American people that you should be allowed to regulate more of our nation's air and water resources.

These very regulations, as you know, are decimating the economy of small communities in my District and are forcing businesses to lay off workers or simply close their doors altogether. Industries that are crucial to our economy, including mining, manufacturing, and transportation, are struggling to make ends meet under your agency's regulatory scheme, and thousands of stable, well paying jobs are hanging in the balance. Nearly every day now, we hear about another major employer filing for bankruptcy or announcing another round of layoffs. Good jobs are disappearing day by day, and we know that onerous regulations coming out of your agency are largely to blame. I have to imagine that you understand how these regulations have led to many counties in my district grappling with 15% unemployment. But can you honestly imagine what it must be like for a miner whose father, and his father before him, all supported their families through this honorable profession – to suddenly be handed a pink slip with no employment prospects in sight?

As I have noted to you many times, there are over 10,000 of these miners in my District who have found themselves unemployed as a result of your single-minded agenda to kill coal in this country. Year after year, Congress has acted to protect these industries and the hardworking people that they employ from the devastating impact of the EPA's actions. Nevertheless, you have come here today asking for more taxpayer dollars to put toward this job killing, anti-coal campaign. In fact, you have asked for an additional \$50 million for the EPA Clean Power Plan, even though the Supreme Court has ordered a stay of the rule and States all over the country are halting their implementation plans in hopes that this rule will be thrown out before it causes any further damage.

Employers rely on the reliable, affordable energy provided by the coal industry to stay competitive in this challenging economic environment. Households in every state depend on this cheap energy source to keep their bills low and their lights on when the unexpected occurs. Distorting the market to ensure that coal cannot compete with more expensive and less reliable commodities is a losing strategy for economic recovery and energy independence. We are feeling the impact of this wrongheaded strategy in my District in Eastern Kentucky, and thousands of miners and their families are suffering as a result.

Adding insult to injury, your budget request reduces or eliminates state grants that are important to rural communities, like those in Appalachia. Congress pushed back on your agency's attempt to do the same last year, and made clear that we would not allow the EPA to shift funding away from important infrastructure programs to pay for EPA priorities such as the Clean Power Plan and other damaging regulations. These issues have a direct impact on the livelihoods of countless families throughout Appalachia and in coal communities across the country.

Casting aside the regulatory agenda that has been rejected on a bipartisan basis here in Congress, there are a number of proposals in your budget request that we simply cannot accept. First, you have proposed significant mandatory and discretionary funding increases for your agency, despite the fact that this Committee has reduced your budget each year for the past six years. While you request another \$127 million in discretionary funds, which constitutes almost a 2% increase over FY2016 levels, you have also asked for \$1.65 billion in new mandatory spending over the next 10 years to advance EPA's own priorities. At a time when Americans are struggling to cope with higher energy costs, I am truly perplexed as to why you think Americans will be receptive to the President's proposal to offset this steep mandatory spending plan with a \$10 per barrel tax on oil. You and I both know that these costs will be borne by the consumer, meaning tighter budgets and harder choices for people all over the country. Like so many others across the budget request, this tax increase is dead on arrival in Congress. It is disappointing that the Administration continues to employ gimmicks like this to skirt the Bipartisan Budget Agreement that the President signed into law late last year. I look forward to hearing your testimony and discussing how EPA is working to address the concerns of those that are struggling to cope with the burdensome requirements put forth by this Administration. Thank you.

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