



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

FY 2018 Budget Hearing: Environmental Protection Agency

June 15, 2017

Opening Statement As Prepared

Good morning. Today, we continue to keep all those affected by yesterday's events, including our colleague Steve Scalise, in our thoughts and prayers. We applaud the Capitol Police for their continued efforts to be the first line of defense to serve and protect all Members, public servants and visitors to the Hill. We have a few of them here today with us. Thank you for all you do.

Now turning our attention to the hearing, we are joined by the 14th Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt. On behalf of our members, congratulations on your confirmation. You have joined a distinguished group. We look forward to hearing your vision, and working with you to provide the resources necessary to manage such an important Agency.

We are also joined by Holly Greaves, Senior Advisor to the Administrator. I believe this is your first time testifying before the subcommittee as well. Welcome to both of you.

Before we dive into the specifics, Administrator Pruitt, you have a tough job here today. Overall, the President's fiscal year 2018 budget proposes to shift \$54 billion from non-defense spending to the defense-side of the ledger. Those are tough top-lines to meet, and many tough choices were necessary in order to meet those targets.

Earlier this morning, I, along with Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Ms. McCollum, and other Members of this subcommittee discussed the defense budget at a hearing with Secretary Mattis. That conversation further underscored the need for additional funding to support our troops and overall U.S. readiness. I wholeheartedly support this goal.

However, enacting \$54 billion in non-defense program cuts in one fiscal year is an untenable proposition. The proposed cuts of this magnitude put agencies and important programs at risk. I suspect that may be a common critique that you and many other Cabinet officials may hear from Congress throughout this year's budget process.

Nevertheless, we appreciate your being here today to defend a budget that proposes to reduce the Agency's funding by \$2.4 billion. In many instances the budget proposes to significantly reduce, or terminate, programs that are vitally important to each Member on this subcommittee.

For example, the Diesel Emission Reduction grants, or “DERA” grants, are essential to improving air quality in my home state of California. So too are the targeted airshed grants. But the budget fails to support the targeted airshed grants. And the DERA grants are proposed to receive an 83% reduction.

The Superfund Program, while considered an infrastructure priority for the President, is reduced by 31%. This reduction will most certainly impact new cleanups and slow ongoing cleanups. These are all proposals that we are unlikely to entertain.

Further, the budget proposes to significantly reduce other important State grants, while asking States to continue to serve as the principle leads to implement delegated environmental programs. Finally, most Geographic programs are proposed for termination. This is perhaps not how you personally would craft EPA’s budget, but it is the budget you have to defend here today.

I am pleased the budget supports a healthy investment in water infrastructure -- a priority of this subcommittee. The budget maintains funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds at current levels, and continues to fund the new WIFIA program. These are both programs that create construction jobs in every State and every congressional district. As you know, I strongly support the WIFIA program given the ability to leverage additional sources of funding. It could prove to be a game-changer to stem the growing backlog of needs for improved water quality, and a nice complement to the SRFs.

Turning to policy, we all want clean air and clean water and a strong robust economy. My constituents in California demand both a healthy environment and job creation. It’s not an “either/or” debate.

In Southern California, we have made tremendous improvements in our air quality over the past number of decades. It’s important that we continue to look for ways to clean our air. I supported EPA’s decision last week to re-calibrate the implementation of the 2015 ozone standards so that we can ensure our clean air efforts are carried out in an effective manner. I remain as committed as ever to providing resources to support proven programs that actually reduce particulate matter and ozone, and, in doing so, improve health outcomes in impacted areas.

At last year’s EPA budget hearing the subcommittee raised concerns that statutory obligations were given insufficient attention, while new regulations were prioritized. I think it’s fair to say that you bring a refreshing new perspective to the position. We look forward to hearing that perspective today. It is my hope that moving forward, we can work together in coordination with our state, local and tribal partners to find sound solutions to tackle the challenges before us.

I know all Members are eager to discuss various issues with you so I will save additional remarks for the period following your testimony. I am pleased to now yield to my friend, and our distinguished Ranking member, Ms. McCollum.

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