

**Opening Statement of Rep. Diana DeGette**  
**Ranking Member**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**  
**Hearing on “Volkswagen’s Emissions Cheating Settlement: Questions**  
**Concerning ZEV Program Implementation”**

**December 6, 2016**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This is the last EPA hearing this Committee will hold with the Obama Administration.

The EPA has not always received the support it deserves from Congress. Even as the Agency has worked to fulfil its mission of protecting human health and the environment, it has faced criticism and attack.

Despite sometimes unfair opposition, EPA has commendably responded to unprecedented environmental challenges facing the country and the planet. I would like to highlight some of the agency’s accomplishments. Under the Obama Administration:

- The EPA has helped bring more than 190 countries together to adopt the Paris Agreement, now considered the most ambitious climate change agreement in history;
- The EPA has set new standards to reduce mercury and other pollutants from industrial air pollution, including boilers, cement plants, and large waste incinerators;
- The EPA has enacted the first-ever fuel economy standards for medium and heavy-duty trucks and put in place new fuel standards for passenger vehicles by the year 2025;

- And, the EPA has developed the Clean Power Plan, which will play a major role in reducing carbon pollution and enhancing air quality.

I would like to thank both of our witnesses for your agency's work.

I would also like to commend both of you for your work on the Volkswagen settlement agreement, which we are here to discuss today. I am supportive of efforts to scrutinize this agreement and ensure that VW is held accountable, and I want to ensure that is the purpose of today's hearing.

We are here because of VW's decision to cheat. For years, VW put tens of thousands of cars on the road that emitted nearly 40 times the NOx levels allowed by law. VW's decision hurt not only its own customers, who thought they were buying clean cars, but all Americans now faced with dirtier air.

The California Air Resources Board, the EPA, and the Department of Justice quickly brought action against VW. Their aim was to both make VW's customers whole and to mitigate the effect that these cars are having on the environment.

The Obama Administration recently reached a partial settlement with VW to accomplish a mitigation strategy. The settlement, which addresses only 2.0-liter diesel vehicles, requires that VW spend nearly \$15 billion to settle allegations of cheating emission tests and deceiving customers. It also orders VW to remove from commerce in the United States or perform an approved emissions modification on the vast majority of the affected vehicles. Finally, it requires VW to designate a \$2.7 billion mitigation trust fund to pay for NOx reduction projects and invest \$2 billion in charging infrastructure for zero emission vehicles.

I applaud EPA for its work. They have taken meaningful steps to make consumers whole and reverse the harm that was caused to the environment.

As I said, I support efforts to investigate this settlement. But I believe we cannot fully understand the issues if VW is not represented here. They were the perpetrators of the fraud that necessitated this action in the first place. We need to hear how they will be following through on their new commitments to do right by their customers and the American people. I would encourage the Committee to hold a future hearing with VW at the table, possibly joined by some other companies and individuals affected by this settlement.

I want to conclude with a message about the next Congress. As we are all aware, the President-elect has not been supportive of the EPA's mission. He has promised to abolish the agency and to back out of global treaties to reduce greenhouse gases. He has declared climate change a hoax.

These statements should give us pause. There is undeniable proof of climate change. Our planet is getting hotter. Natural disasters are more frequent and more severe. Sea ice is at record lows. We need a strong EPA to address these challenges and to work with our international partners to ensure the whole world takes these problems seriously.

So as this year winds down and we look toward the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, it is incredibly important that this Committee support the EPA in its critical role. This Committee has the tradition of working in a bipartisan way to work in the public interest. This should include addressing environmental challenges before it's too late. I hope we can work together to accomplish this mission.

I thank our witnesses for being here today and for your agency's work. I applaud your work on this settlement to ensure consumers and

the environment are protected. And more broadly, I thank the Obama Administration as a whole for its work in prioritize environmental issues and make the world safer and healthier for future generations.

Thank you.