

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Tim Murphy**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations**  
**Hearing on “EPA Oversight: Unimplemented Inspector General**  
**and GAO Recommendations”**  
**September 6, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

The Subcommittee convenes this hearing today to examine unimplemented recommendations by the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office.

Acting on these recommendations would improve EPA’s ability to carry out its core mission—protecting human health and the environment. This mission is never more important than during times of natural disaster like the people of the Gulf Coast are now experiencing in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

On behalf of the Committee, I want to express my sincere sorrow to everyone impacted by this storm. Hurricane Harvey is one of the worst natural disasters the United States has ever faced and it’s still too early to tell the full extent of the devastation that has displaced thousands of people.

Members of this Committee on both sides of the aisle represent constituents experiencing loss and destruction from the storm. Our thoughts and prayers are with these families as they begin to rebuild their lives from this national tragedy.

During the storm and in the aftermath, EPA continues to play a critical role in the federal response to Hurricane Harvey. While EPA is still in the midst of initial response efforts, its work has only just begun. We look forward to monitoring the agency’s response to the disaster and learning the full extent of the environmental impact and challenges that lie ahead.

The loss and destruction of Hurricane Harvey makes today’s hearing even more important. The Committee has the opportunity to learn about ways to strengthen the EPA, including highlighting unimplemented recommendations that may improve EPA’s ability to protect the environment and human health during recovery efforts or future natural disasters.

The Constitution provides Congress with the authority to conduct oversight of the Executive Branch. In partnership with the Government Accountability Office and Office of Inspector General, we work together to root out waste, fraud, and abuse at federal agencies such as the EPA.

Through investigations and audits, both GAO and OIG often make recommendations on ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of EPA. After these recommendations are issued, GAO and OIG work with the agency to ensure that the EPA acts on their findings.

Today, the Committee will learn that even when EPA agrees with recommendations, it may take years to implement them and some are never fully adopted by the agency. As a result, many of the open recommendations span multiple administrations, some dating as far back as the Bush Administration.

While EPA adopts recommendations at a rate around the federal government average, there are still unimplemented recommendations in many critical areas of the agency.

According to the OIG's most recent Semiannual report to Congress, released in May 2017, EPA has the potential to save \$103.3 million by implementing OIG's open recommendations. The Semiannual report showed 43 open recommendations with past due completion dates and 56 with due dates set in the future.

The GAO will testify that EPA has implemented 191 of the 318 recommendations made since 2007, with 127 recommendations still unimplemented.

OIG and GAO have both highlighted deficiencies in EPA's management and operations, including concerns about EPA's information security posture, workforce management, and grant administration.

For example, EPA OIG recently conducted an audit focusing on flaws relating to EPA's information security posture during fiscal years 2015 and 2016. The OIG reported that the agency lacks an understanding of which contractors at the EPA have significant information security responsibilities, raising questions about the agency's network integrity. The OIG recommended that EPA develop a process for identifying these contractors. The EPA is not expected to implement this recommendation until December 31, 2018.

GAO and OIG have also uncovered waste and mismanagement in EPA's grant programs. This is particularly troubling because grants comprise almost half of EPA's budget, about \$4 billion annually. In 2016, GAO found that EPA's grant monitoring practices may impact the agency's ability to efficiently monitor results and increase administrative costs.

Additionally, in 2017, GAO reported that the EPA did not have the information it needed to allocate grant management resources effectively. GAO recommendations range from standardizing the format of grant recipient progress reports to developing a process to analyze workloads. All 12 recommendations in these two reports remain unimplemented.

These are just some of the many reports and audits conducted by the OIG and GAO –We will discuss more of them here today.

Both the EPA OIG and GAO have done excellent work to highlight the problems within EPA and find solutions to solve these issues.

I am grateful for your work and look forward to hearing more about your findings.

Thank you to our witnesses today for your dedication and great work to ensure that EPA is effectively carrying out its mission.

I especially want to recognize Alfredo Gomez, our witness from GAO. He is a Houston native who has two nephews serving on the fire department there. We appreciate their service and sacrifice during Hurricane Harvey and its aftermath.