

**Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**  
**Hearing on “EPA Oversight: Unimplemented Inspector General**  
**and GAO Recommendations”**  
**September 6, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

As Chairman Murphy referenced in his opening remarks, today’s hearing comes at a particularly important time as we have all witnessed the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey. Indeed, members of this committee, on both sides of the aisle, represent districts that were directly impacted by the hurricane and our hearts go out to all those who were affected by this disaster.

We know that the recovery efforts are just beginning and will continue for years to come. Recovering from any disaster, whether its Hurricanes Harvey or Irma or the destructive wildfires burning out of control all across the West, requires coordination at every level of government, and one of the federal agencies that will play a key role in the overall recovery effort is the Environmental Protection Agency.

The challenges facing the EPA that pertain to Harvey are significant, but I hope that the agency seizes upon the lessons it learned in its responses to previous natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy. Today’s hearing represents the first opportunity to hear from EPA’s Office of Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office regarding any outstanding recommendations that, if implemented, could enable the agency to better achieve do its job better.

We will also examine some of the areas of concern that have been identified and commented upon by the OIG and GAO, but whose recommendations remain unimplemented by EPA. We should be mindful, however, that many of OIG’s and GAO’s unimplemented recommendations span multiple administrations and therefore represent long-standing challenges for the agency. For example, we have learned that EPA has failed to complete an agency-wide workload analysis in more than 20 years.

Similarly, both OIG and GAO have consistently identified issues that generate serious concerns as to whether EPA has knowledge of, or adequately monitors, the activities of its contractors and grant recipients despite the significant portion of

the agency's annual budget that is awarded to third parties. Addressing these issues will increase transparency and accountability at EPA in addition to enabling the agency to make better informed budgetary decisions.

I believe that all Americans want a healthy environment for themselves, their families, and their communities. I would like to thank Alan Larsen from the EPA OIG and Alfredo Gomez from the GAO for joining us today to provide testimony and expand upon their organizations' findings and recommendations. I would also like to recognize and thank Mr. Gomez's nephews who are serving in the Houston Fire Department, as well as all first responders who bravely assisted so many of their fellow citizens during Hurricane Harvey.

I am looking forward to a productive discussion this morning regarding actions EPA can take which will enable the agency to better accomplish its core mission of protecting human health and the environment.