



MEMORANDUM

June 6, 2019

To: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Members and Staff

Fr: Committee on Energy and Commerce Staff

Re: Hearing on “Critical Mission: Former Administrators Address the Direction of the EPA”

On Tuesday, June 11, 2019, at 10 a.m. in the John D. Dingell Room, 2123 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold a hearing entitled, “**Critical Mission: Former Administrators Address the Direction of the EPA.**” The hearing will address the mission and future of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

I. THE MISSION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

EPA’s stated mission is to protect human health and the environment.¹ The Agency defines its purpose as ensuring that:

- Americans have clean air, land, and water;
- National efforts to reduce environmental risks are based on the best available scientific information;
- Federal laws protecting human health and the environment are administered and enforced fairly, effectively, and as Congress intended;
- Environmental stewardship is integral to U.S. policies concerning natural resources, human health, economic growth, energy, transportation, agriculture, industry, and international trade, and these factors are similarly considered in establishing environmental policy;
- All parts of society—communities, individuals, businesses, and state, local, and tribal governments—have access to accurate information sufficient to effectively participate in managing human health and environmental risks;
- Contaminated lands and toxic sites are cleaned up by potentially responsible parties and revitalized; and
- Chemicals in the marketplace are reviewed for safety.²

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Our Mission and What We Do* (www.epa.gov/aboutepa/our-mission-and-what-we-do).

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Our Mission and What We Do* (www.epa.gov/aboutepa/our-mission-and-what-we-do). The Trump Administration modified the purposes listed under EPA’s mission, which appear on the Agency’s website. Among other changes, the previous webpage contained an additional stated purpose: that “the United States plays a leadership role in working with other nations to protect the global environment.” U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Our Mission and What We Do*

For nearly 50 years, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, EPA has successfully developed and implemented protections authorized by public health statutes, including the Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, and other important statutes.

As a result, health benefits for Americans have been significant and the economy has grown as environmental protections have improved. For example, according to EPA, from 1970 to 2016, aggregate emissions of six criteria air pollutants (carbon monoxide, lead, ground-level ozone, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide) were reduced over 70 percent, while U.S. gross domestic product grew by over 253 percent.³ To cite another example, in 2010 alone, the reductions in fine particle and ozone pollution due to the Clean Air Act resulted in avoiding more than 160,000 premature deaths, 130,000 heart attacks, millions of cases of respiratory difficulties, such as asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and 86,000 hospital admissions.⁴

II. FORMER ADMINISTRATORS ADVOCATE FOR EPA'S MISSION

In April, seven former Administrators sent the Committee on Energy and Commerce and other congressional committees a letter underscoring the importance of EPA's mission and urging congressional oversight of the Agency.⁵ The letter was signed by former EPA Administrators who served in both Democratic and Republican administrations: the Honorable William D. Ruckelshaus (1970-1973 and 1983-1985), the Honorable Lee Thomas (1985-1989), the Honorable William K. Reilly (1989-1993), the Honorable Carol Browner (1993-2001), the Honorable Christine Todd Whitman (2001-2003), the Honorable Lisa Jackson (2009-2013), and the Honorable Gina McCarthy (2013-2017).⁶

The former Administrators wrote “[w]e are united that there has never been a more important time for us to put aside our differences and advocate collectively for public health and the environment. Time is of the essence, and much is at stake.”⁷ Additionally, the former Administrators urged this Committee to:

([web.archive.org/web/20170316160756/https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/our-mission-and-what-we-do](https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/our-mission-and-what-we-do)) (captured Mar. 16, 2017).

³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Working Together: FY 2018-2022 U.S. EPA Strategic Plan* (Feb. 2018).

⁴ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Clean Air Act Overview: The Clean Air Act and the Economy (www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-and-economy).

⁵ Letter from Hon. Carol Browner, Hon. Lisa Jackson, Hon. Gina McCarthy, Hon. William Reilly, Hon. William Ruckelshaus, Hon. Lee Thomas, and Hon. Christine Todd Whitman to Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr., Chairman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce and Rep. Greg Walden, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce et al. (Apr. 8, 2019).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

- Affirm the bipartisan mission of EPA to protect public health and the environment and hold the Agency responsible for adherence to its mission and legislative mandates;
- Focus on the most significant and pervasive public health and environmental risks, including attention to our most vulnerable populations;
- Support the essential role of rigorous consensus science, economics, and engineering and ensure their use in EPA decisions and regulations;
- Concentrate on substantive policy, management, and enforcement/ compliance issues; and
- Look ahead to the future to establish a foundation for advancing higher performing federal, state, and tribal environmental management systems through innovation, collaboration, and partnerships.⁸

In addition to raising these issues in the April letter, key areas of environmental concern have been raised by some former EPA Administrators, including the Agency’s disregard for science-driven policy;⁹ the lack of U.S. international leadership on addressing climate change;¹⁰ EPA’s roll backs of key public health and environmental protections;¹¹ and proposed reductions to EPA’s budget.¹²

III. WITNESSES

The following witnesses have been invited to testify:

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
 Administrator (2013-2017)
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman
 Administrator (2001-2003)
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Christine Todd Whitman, *Climate Change and Conservatism*, Harvard Law Review Blog (Nov. 8, 2018) (blog.harvardlawreview.org/climate-change-and-conservatism/).

¹⁰ Christine Todd Whitman, *Placation Will Cost Us the Planet*, U.S. News (June 1, 2017); See also William K. Reilly, *Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by William K. Reilly at Oxford University, “Environmental Policy in the Era of Trump”* (Apr. 27, 2017).

¹¹ Christine Todd Whitman, *Pruitt’s Replacement Could Be Even Worse for the Planet*, Washington Post (Jul. 6, 2018).

¹² William D. Ruckelshaus, Lee M. Thomas, and William K. Reilly, *Three Republican EPA Administrators: Trump is Putting Us On a Dangerous Path*, Washington Post (May 26, 2017); See also Christine Todd Whitman, *I Ran George W. Bush’s EPA- and Trump’s Cuts to the Agency Would Endanger Lives*, Atlantic (Mar. 31, 2017).

The Honorable William K. Reilly
Administrator (1989-1993)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The Honorable Lee M. Thomas
Administrator (1985-1989)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency