

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.**

***Hearing on “The Path Forward: Restoring the Vital Mission of EPA”***

**March 10, 2021**

After four years of attacks on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), I am pleased we are holding this important hearing today on how to restore EPA so it can once again fulfill its mission of protecting human health and the environment.

To combat today’s many environmental threats, it is essential that we have a robust, effective, and fully resourced EPA.

We know that rebuilding EPA will not be an easy task after four years of the Trump Administration. In recent years, Trump’s EPA undermined key public health protections, including common sense limits on pollution from power plants, successful automobile efficiency standards, and protections that keep American families safe from mercury and other toxic hazards. They let polluters off the hook by weakening EPA’s enforcement program. They eroded the EPA’s essential scientific infrastructure. And they sidelined and silenced the agency’s talented and dedicated career staff, as scandals and investigations captured headlines on an almost daily basis.

Thankfully, it is a new day at EPA.

The Biden Administration has hit the ground running and taken decisive action to get EPA and its mission back on track.

On day one, President Biden reasserted our international climate leadership by rejoining the Paris Climate Accord. Shortly thereafter, the President signed a broad range of additional executive actions to reverse the Trump Administration’s dangerous rollbacks and address the climate crisis, while also aggressively pursuing economic justice and economic revitalization.

As our witnesses today can attest, EPA’s record of accomplishments over the years has shown that protecting the environment and public health is not only good policy, but also good for the economy and jobs. So, it makes sense that the President’s early actions on the environment are an important part of his jobs agenda.

Recognizing that environmental injustices have historically been concentrated in poorer communities, President Biden assigned new duties to EPA to strengthen enforcement of protections in environmental justice communities. He also required the agency to improve monitoring and provide real-time pollution data to the public. And he established the Justice40

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initiative, with the goal of delivering 40 percent of overall benefits of federal investments to environmental justice communities.

These are key and welcome steps, but they are not enough on their own. Congress must act to ensure EPA has the right resources and tools in place to succeed, and that science is always at the heart of public policy.

Just last week, the Committee introduced the CLEAN Future Act, ambitious legislation to combat the climate crisis this decade and achieve net zero greenhouse gas pollution.

It's critical that we act as more and more Americans have been forced to confront the harsh realities of climate change. In California, wildfires have destroyed everything in their path. In Texas, millions of people are still being impacted by the extreme weather last month that led to deadly power outages and unsafe drinking water.

As Governor Whitman and I saw firsthand after Superstorm Sandy in 2012, it can take years for the economy, families, and communities to recover from extreme weather events.

If we fail to address climate change, we could also see millions of people displaced from their homes by rising seas, and more American farms destroyed by drought and other disruptive weather patterns.

Our witnesses with us this morning truly know what is at stake and what must be done. They have served under Democratic and Republican Presidents, both at headquarters and in regional offices. They are uniquely qualified to share their opinions on how to get EPA back on track and how Congress can help EPA tackle the enormous environmental challenges that confront us.

Simply put, we have no time to waste.

If we all work together, I am confident that we can restore EPA and address environmental challenges with the urgency and scale necessary.