

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Morgan Griffith  
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations Virtual Hearing  
“The Path Forward: Restoring the Vital Mission of EPA.”**

**March 10, 2021**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you, Chair DeGette, for holding this hearing on the path forward for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I also want to thank the witnesses for taking the time to join us today.

Today’s hearing will help us build on the important work that the Energy and Commerce Committee and the EPA have accomplished to date. When Republicans were in the Majority between 2015 and 2018, we pushed bipartisan hearings and bipartisan legislative efforts on issues such as reducing carbon emissions, boosting renewable energy options, driving modernization and innovation within industry, pushing Brownfields cleanup and redevelopment, increasing compliance for drinking water infrastructure, and improving compliance with ozone standards, to name a few.

In addition to the work of this Committee, the EPA has had a number of key accomplishments over the past four years. For example, the agency focused on Brownfields and Superfund sites, and in doing so, delisted 82 sites from the National Priorities List, with 27 deletions in fiscal year 2020 – the most in nearly 20 years. In addition, since 2017, emissions of the six criteria air pollutants dropped seven percent overall by the end of 2019, and unhealthy days for sensitive

groups dropped by 34 percent. The EPA also took steps to champion recycling and combat marine debris. Further, the EPA invested in America's clean water infrastructure; updated the Lead and Copper Rule, providing a comprehensive approach for reducing lead in the drinking water; finalized four regulations that will reduce greenhouse gases; implemented the Affordable Clean Energy Rule, which will reduce emissions from coal-fired power plants; finalized greenhouse gas emissions standards for commercial aircraft; set corporate average fuel economy and carbon dioxide emissions standards for MY 2021-26 cars and trucks; and finalized updates to national standards for the oil and gas industry. These are just a few examples of the accomplishments achieved by the federal government over the past four years to help further the mission of the agency.

However, there is always room for improvement. We should not be complacent when it comes to the vital mission of the EPA. It is our job to oversee that the agency is following all environmental laws. It is well-known that public confidence in the EPA has been lacking. It is important that we find ways to rebuild trust and ensure that the EPA is considered a partner, rather than an adversary in the fight to have cleaner water, air, and soil. In addition, no single state or region is the same, science continues to evolve, and we must balance the goals and the mission of the agency with the cost of implementation, including

protecting American jobs. Further, America can and should be a leader in developing innovative technologies to produce energy with little to no emissions.

Congress may disagree on how to approach some of the issues that are facing the agency and our country today, but at the end of the day, we all agree on the desire to have clean air, clean water, and environmental protection. I hope today's discussion is a step for us to find ways to do that.

That said, I would be remiss if I didn't comment on how we had a very similar hearing in June 2019 to the one we are having today. Gaining perspective from former EPA Administrators about what the future of the agency looks like has value, but, at a certain point, we need to engage the current officials who are at the agency, roll up our sleeves, and get to work to conduct oversight of the agency itself and implement any changes that we deem necessary. An essential step to talking to current officials at the agency would be for the Democratic leadership in the Senate to confirm the Administrator as soon as possible so we can begin these discussions.

I look forward to our discussion today to learn more about each of your experiences with the EPA, what the agency should look like moving forward, and how we in Congress can help the agency achieve its mission. I also look forward to hearing about not only the challenges at the agency, but also the challenges of those regulated by the agency, so we can try to mitigate and address those

challenges. We must ensure the agency is best positioned to be partners in our nation's efforts to carry out the core mission that Congress tasked the agency with in statute: clean air for Americans to breathe, safe water for our citizens to drink, and soils free from pollution. I hope that we can have a constructive, bipartisan conversation about how best to do that.

Thank you, Madam Chair, I yield back.