

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittees on Energy and Power, Environment and the Economy
Hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's FY 2017 Budget
March 22, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

I know that the agency has an ambitious agenda it would like to put in place before President Obama's tenure in the White House is completed. But the EPA should focus its efforts less on finalizing a wave of new regulations and more on getting back to the basic functions for which the agency was created.

Improving public health by ensuring the quality of the air we breathe and the safety of our drinking water supply - that's the reason Republicans and Democrats came together in 1970 and created the Environmental Protection Agency. It was also the reason Congress passed many bipartisan public health bills like the Clean Air Act and Safe Drinking Water Act for the agency to administer.

However, the heartbreaking events unfolding in Flint, Michigan, are a sign that EPA has strayed from its core mission. Make no mistake, the system failed at all levels that resulted in the lead contamination problems with Flint's water supply, but it is clear that EPA's poor performance of its duties under the Safe Drinking Water Act was a part of the problem.

I hope that in the same bipartisan spirit that launched EPA in 1970 that we can rededicate ourselves to the basic public health protections that are the reasons this agency was brought into existence. The most recent example being our bipartisan work to strengthen the public disclosure requirements in the Safe Drinking Water Act. This was not only a step in the right direction, but perhaps more importantly, I hope it will provide the reset needed at the agency to focus it on doing the tasks assigned to it under the Safe Drinking Water Act, including compliance verification activities. What we are doing now will not prevent damage in Flint, but we owe it to the people of Flint, as well as other communities that may face lead contaminated water supplies, to sharpen EPA's oversight role in protecting public health.

I know many people in Washington are eager to lay blame on one political party or the other when disasters like Toledo, Gold King Mine, or Flint threaten a community's drinking water. Regardless of who is responsible, we need to address the crises those people face. I am interested in being part of the solution and want you to know, Administrator McCarthy, that you should look to us as a partner in providing better drinking water to Americans. It is going to take creative solutions and there will surely be challenges, and I hope we can put our heads together and put a greater emphasis on problem solving and doing right by the American people rather than playing the blame game.

While we are talking about places where we can, and should, be working together, I also want to mention our committee's reform efforts for the Toxic Substances Control Act. As you know, the House has worked very hard to put together a bill that addresses the legal shortcomings in the law. I know the agency would like to see reform occur this Congress, I look forward to your support in helping us get it to the president's desk.

This committee looks forward to working constructively with EPA, and I hope that this final year for the administration is one that offers many such opportunities.

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