

**Opening Statement of the Honorable John Shimkus
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
Hearing on EPA's Brownfields Program:
Empowering Cleanup and Encouraging Economic Redevelopment
April 21, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The term brownfields usually refers to abandoned or closed commercial or industrial properties that may be contaminated because of their prior use. These sites however, often have significant redevelopment potential. The economic redevelopment of these sites means very good things for the local community – things like: jobs; an improved tax base; and being able to rid communities of blighted properties and cleanup entire neighborhoods. According to EPA, the Agency's Brownfields Program has grown into a proven, results-oriented program that has changed the way contaminated property is perceived, addressed, and managed. This is demonstrated by the numbers. As of March 1, 2016, EPA's Brownfields Program has assessed 23,932 sites and leveraged 108,924 jobs. The program has also leveraged almost 21 billion dollars for cleanup and redevelopment. We will hear today from Mr. Stanislaus more about these statistics and why EPA believes the program works and maybe find out from him whether there are things we could do to improve the program.

The EPA Brownfields Program is also an important tool used by states, local governments, and private stakeholders to clean up under-used or abandoned industrial and commercial properties and to return them to beneficial use. Cleaning up these sites and returning them to productive use is great for the economy because brownfields grants can be directly leveraged into jobs, into additional redevelopment funds, and into increased residential property values.

I have a number of brownfield sites in my District ranging from former family gas stations and the local corner dry cleaners to a former plating company and a former hospital. Throughout my District sites are being redeveloped to create greenspace and to return areas to commercial use. My colleague, the ranking member Mr. Pallone, has said many times how important it is that we take a look at the Brownfields program. I agree. We need to see what works – and there is a lot to like about the program – but we find that there are always areas we can improve upon.

On that note, we also welcome our second panel who will walk us through how public and private stakeholders can work together in pursuit of a common redevelopment goal and give us their perspectives on the Brownfields Program.

We welcome Mr. Anderson from the State of Virginia who is here on behalf of a good friend of the Subcommittee, ASTSWMO. Mr. Anderson will fill us in on the state role in brownfields redevelopment.

Also joining us today is Mayor Bollwage, from Elizabeth, New Jersey. Mayor Bollwage has been very involved in his city's redevelopment. Mr. Henry is here with us to give his perspective as a consultant who does urban planning and redevelopment and as someone who used to run the Brownfields program in a major U.S. city.

We'll hear from an environmental lawyer, Ms. Romig, who understands the legal ramifications and hurdles facing clients who may be interested in pursuing redevelopment. And last, but not least, we will hear from Ms. Eady, also a lawyer, who works for the Conservation Law Foundation.

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