



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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Pallone’s Opening Remarks at EPA Administrator Pruitt Hearing

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on Environment hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2019 Environmental Protection Agency Budget:”*

Administrator Pruitt has brought secrecy, conflicts of interest and scandal to the EPA. In any other administration, Republican or Democrat, you would be long gone by now.

So far, 140 House Democrats have signed onto a resolution introduced by Ms. Castor expressing “no confidence” in you, Mr. Pruitt. Additionally, four Republican House Members have also called on you to step down.

And the voices are growing. Just look at the critiques from former Bush EPA Administrator and New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, who called Administrator Pruitt’s tenure a, “slap in the face to fiscal responsibility and responsible governance” and said, “evidence is abundant of the dangerous political turn of an agency that is supposed to be guided by science.” Another former Republican EPA Administrator, William Reilly, called Administrator Pruitt a, “third rate ideologue.”

Past administrators of both parties believed in the EPA’s mission and understood that they had been given a sacred trust by the people of our country.

Unfortunately, this is not the case, Mr. Pruitt, clearly you do not believe in EPA’s mission, and appear to have forgotten that you are here to serve all the American people, not merely a select few, or just yourself. The fact is Administrator Pruitt has used this office as nothing more than an opportunity to enrich himself and his corporate friends, and President Trump seems to be perfectly fine with all of his actions. So much for draining the swamp.

When we met in December, you pledged to be more transparent. You promised to do a better job providing technical assistance, sending witnesses to hearings, and responding to Congressional requests. You have followed through on none of those promises.

What you have done is generate scandal after scandal. When confronted about them, you have repeatedly failed to take responsibility for your actions. Instead, you have blamed your staff, your security detail, your critics – pretty much anyone but yourself. You are accountable for your agency and all of these scandals. The buck stops at your desk.

There are so many outstanding questions that we need truthful answers to today, because so far, we've only gotten half-truths, misleading answers, or outright falsehoods. For instance, you rented a condo at well below market value, and then emphatically claimed on Fox News that your landlord's lobbyist husband had no business before the EPA – a statement proven to be untrue.

It is that kind of conduct that prompted Ranking Members Tonko, DeGette, and Vice Ranking Member Castor and I to request that you be placed under oath for this hearing and that it be expanded to include the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. The Chairmen did not agree to that request but I would remind you what the Chairman said to the press when he declined our request: lying to Congress is a crime, regardless of whether or not you are sworn in.

Now, Committee Republicans have conveniently told the press they are investigating you for some your outrageous ethical abuses. Yet, I've seen no evidence from Committee Republicans that this is really happening.

Fortunately, Committee Democrats have been demanding answers and five independent federal investigations are now being done into your conduct at our request. Yesterday, I joined with Ranking Member Cummings of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee to request an additional investigation by the Office of Special Counsel into your troubling pattern of apparently retaliating against EPA employees who question your extravagant spending.

I am confident that these investigations will affirm what I have come to believe is true: you are unfit to hold public office and undeserving of the public trust.

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