

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Environment and Climate Change Hearing on
“The Fiscal Year 2020 Environmental Protection Agency”**

April 29, 2021

As prepared for delivery

Good morning, Administrator Regan. This is the first time many of our members and I have had the chance to meet you since you were sworn in as Administrator. Let me congratulate and personally welcome you to the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Our Committee has legislative responsibilities for and regulatory oversight of the vast majority of your statutory authority. We take our responsibilities seriously. I hope you are committed to implementing the law, and not creating your own rule book.

Based upon the kind words of your home state colleagues and reputation; we expect today to start a thoughtful, ongoing, and open dialogue between us. We are eager to learn more about the Biden-Harris Administration’s proposed EPA budget. It represents a 21.4 percent increase over EPA’s current funding levels. And if Congress gives EPA all of the proposed budget, it would be the most money ever appropriated to EPA at one time by \$1 billion.

The only thing “lean” about this budget is its details. It’s less than two pages with very limited information. But money is only one view into this Administration’s vision for EPA. We want to know what we are buying, not just how big the check is.

I’ll remind everyone that before the pandemic-- Our economy was booming. It was the hottest job market in half a century.

After a decade of people asking, ‘where are the jobs?’ wages were rising, more jobs were available than people looking for work. This was because we lifted the regulatory burden—including reversing top-down decisions from the EPA that hurt our farmers and ranchers.

So when it comes to this EPA budget and the agencies’ reflection of priorities, we want to understand if innovation – the private-sector foundation of so much success in this country – is being sidelined. Regulations and political forces should not be molding the economy and making EPA into the arbiter of ALL acceptable economic growth.

We want to work with you to grow the American economy and clean up the environment where it is unsafe. But, we also want to understand if this budget will hold back the potential for our economy to boom again in the long term—especially for our fossil fuel communities.

We want to know that reliable, high-quality, and objective science is being used to inform decision-making that EPA won’t hide from public scrutiny of this science and that EPA will not intentionally mischaracterize “science” to politicize actual policy judgments.

We want to know if this budget will still encourage cooperative federalism as a viable partnership between the Federal government and your former colleagues in the States, or if the States are merely seen as underfunded servants of federal centralized planning.

We want to know whether this budget envisions EPA following the law or infusing its own intent into it. Whether EPA is focusing its resources on improving environmental and public health outcomes through compliance or if the Agency will use its enforcement policy to punish violators and harass politically disfavored entities.

We want to know if this budget will build on the undisputed environmental successes of the last Administration: the most Superfund cleanups in 2 decades, reduced air pollution with economic growth, and increased inspection and permitting efficiencies. Or, does this budget end these results for partisan reasons, dropping Agency accountability and responsibility to Americans and the law.

We want to know if grave lessons have been learned from past EPA politicians who focused their attention on a few major priorities, allowing “mundane” areas to explode into the horrors in Flint and East Chicago.

Finally, will the EPA listen to and care about the practicalities, including affordability, of its actions on the futures of people in rural areas and struggling small businesses.

Mr. Administrator, these are serious questions. We want to work with you to make positive gains for the communities we represent – that allow private sector expansion and environmental protection. The EPA must not be an obstacle to development and prosperity for American families.

We don't expect to always agree with you but surely we can agree on that. Again, welcome. I look forward to your testimony.