

Chair Earl L. “Buddy” Carter
**Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Environment,
Manufacturing, and Critical Materials:**
**“Holding the Biden-Harris EPA Accountable for Rush-to-Green
Spending”**
September 19, 2024
As prepared for delivery

Good morning, everyone!

The Subcommittee will now come to order; and I recognize myself for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

I am pleased to welcome our sole witness today, the Inspector General of the Environmental Protection Agency, Sean O’Donnell.

Mr. O’Donnell has held the position of Inspector General since early 2020 and is here to testify before this Subcommittee on the spending and activities of the Agency, especially those connected to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or I.I.J.A., and the misnamed Inflation Reduction Act, or I.R.A.

For context, the Environmental Protection Agency’s entire NON-I.I.J.A., NON-I.R.A. annual budget for fiscal year 2024 is \$10.136 billion. This amount reflects an increase of 10.4 percent over EPA’s Fiscal Year 2021 funding level of \$9.085 billion.

The I.I.J.A., alone, provided EPA \$60 billion over 5 fiscal years or \$12 billion dollars in annual appropriations to EPA. Not only was it the single largest appropriation ever provided to EPA, but it also more than doubled annual spending at the Agency during the Biden-Harris Administration.

The I.R.A. later came along and gave EPA another \$41.5 billion dollars in new and expanded programs at EPA.

That’s 2 bills, an additional \$101.5 billion, and roughly 10 times the amount of money normally dropped off at EPA to spend.

This is a massive infusion of funding and outrageous level of spending and pressure on our national debt, particularly for many of my Republican colleagues who represent almost two-thirds of congressional districts in America where the average median income is below the national average and whose children will be asked to pay for this spending.

Regardless of if you voted for these bills, though, I hope you will agree with me that it is imperative that Congress conducts robust oversight of all this money given to EPA and the other agencies – it is the right thing to do.

That said, I realize that there may be some limits to how much information the Inspector General has for us today and may be able to get for us in the future.

Congress clearly directed his office to oversee I.I.J.A. funding and gave his office \$53 million a year to do it. Unfortunately, I.R.A. provided the I.G. no requirement to police that spending and Congress has approved no funding to do it.

Regardless, fulfilling these directives -- or lack thereof -- are dependent upon the willingness of EPA to allow real oversight to occur.

The Committee has had uneven results in its own investigating of these programs.

Sometimes we have had success, sometimes we have met resistance, and usually we've been made to wait a long time to find out which it is.

When Administrator Regan testified earlier this year, he assured us that he talks with the I.G. all the time when we asked him if he was fully cooperating on the oversight. I look forward to finding out if the Inspector General's experience has been different than the Committee's.

If his experience is less than satisfactory, I would like to know what legal constraints he faces and what he needs from EPA to be successful.

I also think it is important to find out if EPA implemented any lessons that it should have learned from its spending experiences with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

And, if EPA made any changes based on this experience, what difference, if any, they made.

We should know more about how much of the allocated I.R.A. funding has already been spent, what type of quality control EPA and its grantees are placing on this on the disbursement and use of this funding -- including by third-party vendors on the use of the money, and what objective measurements are being used to measure the results.

Finally, I hope we are able to explore some of EPA's interactions with the States, which also have a significant burden with these funds.

This is especially important in light of the aggressive regulatory push by this Administration and its non-governmental, ideological allies.

I look forward to an insightful discussion with our witness.

I yield back the balance of my time.