

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Holding the Biden-Harris EPA Accountable for Radical Rush-to-Green Spending”

September 19, 2024

Democrats delivered historic wins for the American people last Congress by passing both the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. These laws are creating hundreds of thousands of new, good paying jobs, cutting costs for working families, and strengthening America’s energy independence by expanding homegrown clean energy. But that is not the story the Republicans will attempt to tell at today’s hearing.

Unfortunately, this hearing is another transparently political attempt to undermine EPA and denounce so-called “rush-to-green” policies under the guise of oversight. Time and again, Republicans have made clear they are not interested in effective implementation of EPA programs or constructive oversight. Instead, they are fixated on undermining these laws as directed by Trump’s extreme Project 2025.

Trump’s Project 2025 is a manifesto that lays out a plan for consolidating power in the White House, gutting checks and balances, and eliminating the independence of our federal agencies, like EPA. It specifically calls for repealing the Inflation Reduction Act; completely eliminating vital EPA offices; rescinding longstanding authorities that allow EPA to fulfill its mission; and undermining science by wholly dismantling the Agency’s independent scientific advisory panels.

All in all, Trump’s Project 2025 would politicize EPA and completely starve the agency of resources, making it nearly impossible for the agency to fulfill its mission of protecting public health and the environment.

My Republican colleagues have spent this entire Congress trying to implement Trump’s Project 2025 plans. For example, their H.R. 1 – the Polluters Over People Act – undercut EPA’s authority and aimed to fully repeal key EPA programs like the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. So my Republican colleagues cannot in good faith now claim that they want programs like the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to succeed when they have tried to repeal it three times – before it was even fully implemented.

They are also unfairly targeting programs like the Clean School Bus Program which, by the way, has been so popular that demand for this funding has consistently outpaced supply in every round of funding. Schools, parents, and students across the country want cleaner, healthier air, and EPA is delivering. Deployment challenges always arise with new programs, and EPA’s Office of the Inspector General identified opportunities for improvement. The good news is, EPA has already implemented or is in the process of addressing those recommendations. So it

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should be no surprise that the majority's recent staff report on the Clean School Bus Program failed to expose any waste, fraud, or abuse – contrary to their hyperbolic press release.

So while I appreciate the opportunity to hear from the Inspector General about his office's work, I believe the Republican Majority is holding this hearing in bad faith. Committee Republicans claim to care about oversight but then make it clear that their true intention is to smear and tear down programs that do not fit with their polluters over people agenda. And we cannot confuse fearmongering with good faith, constructive oversight.

EPA takes its obligation in administering its programs very seriously, especially as the first line of defense against waste, fraud, and abuse. I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that there are hard-working people at EPA ensuring every dollar is spent fulfilling the agency's mission to protect human health and the environment. And throughout the Biden-Harris Administration, EPA has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to working with the OIG to improve programs and address concerns. As Inspector General O'Donnell notes, EPA Administrator Regan is quote "sett[ing] the tone at the top regarding cooperation between the Agency and the OIG."

Democrats remain committed to conducting constructive oversight that will help programs succeed and complement the IG's important oversight work. In fact, we provided nearly \$270 million for the EPA's OIG in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. What's more, the Biden-Harris Administration has requested increases in funding to support the EPA OIG's work – additional funding that Republicans have roundly rejected.

I believe constructive congressional oversight can enhance EPA's efforts to mitigate program risks and make certain that every dollar has the greatest possible impact. Unfortunately, I haven't witnessed much constructive oversight from my Republican colleagues.

Thank you, and I yield back.