



Chairman Ken Calvert

*Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations*

Statement for the Environmental Protection Agency FY 2019 Budget Hearing (as prepared)

Thursday, April 26, 2018 (2pm)

I'd like to welcome everyone to this afternoon's hearing. I look forward to a thoughtful discussion addressing EPA's fiscal year 2019 budget request and a number of policy issues of interest to this Subcommittee. Before we begin, I'd like remind our subcommittee Members and those in the audience of the importance of engaging in a thoughtful, substantive discussion. While there may be disagreements relating to the views expressed today, my intent as Chairman is to maintain order and decorum. Therefore, I ask those in attendance today—both in our audience and seated at this table—to be respectful of one another and to Administrator Pruitt—throughout today's hearing.

Today we welcome back to the Committee the 14th Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt. Joining the Administrator is Holly Greaves, Chief Financial Officer for the Agency.

Administrator Pruitt, you have had a busy year. You've worked to reform the Agency and provide regulatory certainty, while simultaneously finding ways to create jobs and protect the environment and human health. We look forward to hearing more about the budget request, understanding your goals for the Agency for the upcoming year, and discussing a variety of other issues.

Just last month, this Committee worked hard to finish work on the fiscal year 2018 budget. Utilizing additional funds from the February budget agreement, this subcommittee was able to provide nearly \$2 billion in critical infrastructure funding – which included targeted investments in EPA's water infrastructure and cleanup programs.

As Members of the Appropriations Committee, it is our job to ensure that the Agency spends these funds as Congress intended and in a manner reflective of the Agency's mission to protect human health and the environment. I know that I, along with my colleagues, want to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent on water infrastructure, on-the-ground projects, and other vitally important programs, rather than on some of the activities we've seen reported in the press. We will continue to provide necessary oversight to ensure that the EPA and other agencies under this subcommittee's jurisdiction are held accountable, remain good stewards of taxpayer dollars, and comply with Congressional notification requirements.

Overall, the President's fiscal year 2019 request provides \$6.146 billion for the EPA, which is \$1.9 billion below the fiscal year 2018 base funding level. While some reductions may be in order, cuts of this magnitude put important programs at risk.

Within the request, State categorical grants, which provide financial assistance to States and Tribes to develop and implement environmental programs, are significantly reduced or terminated altogether.

States rely heavily on these funds, and cuts of this magnitude will severely impact their ability to meet statutory requirements and address serious health and environmental concerns. The Geographic Programs, which are very important to a number of my colleagues, are all but eliminated in the request.

Beyond these programs, the budget also proposes to eliminate popular rural water technical assistance grants, the National Estuary Program, and the targeted airshed grants. The targeted airshed grants, along with the Diesel Emissions Reduction grants, or "DERA" grants (which are cut by 86%), are essential to my home State of California. My state relies on these grant programs to help drastically improve air quality by accelerating the replacement of older engines with newer, cleaner engines.

In spite of these cuts, I was pleased to see that the budget request continues to support and prioritize updating aging infrastructure for both drinking water and wastewater systems by maintaining funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds at current levels. The budget also maintains the Superfund program just below current levels -- a promising increase from the fiscal year 2018 request.

Pivoting to policy, I think my colleagues would agree that we all want clean air and water, to protect human health, and to support a strong, robust economy. My constituents in California demand both a healthy environment and job creation, and I hope to work with your Agency to ensure both.

In Southern California, air quality remains one of our biggest concerns. While we have made significant strides to improve air quality over the past decades, we must continue to find ways to clean our air. As your Agency works to finalize designations under the 2015 ozone standard, I hope that we can partner with the States to find innovative, cost-effective solutions to help all counties reach attainment without imposing economic burdens. I want to be sure that these clean air efforts are carried out in an effective manner, and that we provide the resources necessary to support programs that have proven effective in reducing particulate matter and ozone.

Finally, at this hearing last year, you committed to reducing redundancies and inefficiencies within the Agency to better prioritize EPA's core mission. We hope to hear more about your Agency's ongoing work to review, reconsider, and ease regulations that bring undue stress on our nation's industries while also remaining mindful of our environmental resources.

As we approach the fiscal year 2019 budget, I reiterate that the power of the purse remains with Congress, and my colleagues and I will do our best to continue to address infrastructure needs,

water quality improvements, cleanups, and many of the issues we discuss here today. This subcommittee remains committed to continuing to work with your Agency, along with our State, local, and tribal partners to seek solutions to the many challenges before us.

No doubt all of the Members here today are eager to discuss a number of issues with you, so I will ask Members to abide by the 5-minute rule so that everyone has a chance to participate in today's hearing.

With that, I am pleased to now yield to the gentle lady from Minnesota – our Ranking Member Ms. McCollum – for any opening remarks she would like to make.

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