

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable John Shimkus**  
**Chairman, Subcommittee on Environment**  
**Hearing Entitled: “The Fiscal Year 2019 Environmental Protection Agency Budget”**  
**April 26, 2018**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning Administrator Pruitt and welcome back to the Environment subcommittee. I am glad you are here today and look forward to our discussion.

From a policy perspective, and from my seat outside the agency, I am generally pleased with the direction you are taking the EPA.

As I mentioned when you were here 5 months ago, the American people don't want ideologues rewriting or reinterpreting law. They expect and deserve folks at agencies like EPA who will faithfully implement what Congress has passed.

I am especially happy with the reinvigorated Superfund program and in particular, after more than 20 years on the National Priorities List, I'm very glad to see progress finally being made at the West Lake Landfill. Superfund sites are tangible environmental and public health problems that may pose multiple immediate threats. One of the first bills I worked on when I joined this committee was to help make the Superfund program operate more rationally; so, to see that you also care about this program is important to me.

I also want to applaud your initiative to look at the EPA's workforce and identify ways to make the agency more efficient and effective. As I mentioned back in December, this exercise, sadly, has not been undertaken in more than 20 years. I believe a lack of consistent review can lead to complacency or foster regulatory overreach, and I look forward to learning more about efforts to reshape the bureaucracy.

As the author of the changes to title I of the Toxic Substances Control Act, I also want to commend you for reducing the backlog of applications for new chemicals. I understand the backlog has crept back up by one-third of its normal level, but I look forward to seeing what actions you take, including the use of new user fees, to help the EPA operate its new chemicals review process more expeditiously.

Finally, I am glad to hear that the regulatory process you are running is not looking to short circuit public comment. Past Administrations have issued enforceable guidelines or employed other tricks to get their way on policy when many Americans and their representatives in Congress may have disagreed.

Now, as public servants, our jobs are not based solely on the things we do, or the things we have done, but also on the way we conduct our business.

It is no secret that there have been many stories in the press about the management and operations of the Agency and your dealings with potentially regulated sectors. I consider much of this narrative to be a distraction, but one this committee cannot ignore. I look forward to hearing your side of the story on the rumors and allegations you're facing.

Before yielding back my time, I want to make a couple of environmental budget and policy observations.

First, even though Federal law requires the President to propose a budget, the U.S. Constitution vests the actual budget and spending authority with the Congress, particularly the House of Representatives.

Second, the President's budget was released on February 12, 2018 without full knowledge what Congress would do in the Consolidated Appropriations Act that became law six weeks later. Had the Administrator joined us in February or March, he would not have had to face this dynamic. But regardless of what members think of the Administration's budget proposal, I hope today they will remember our own role in the budget and spending debate.

Finally, I want to say something about administrative efforts regarding transportation fuels. Recently, the White House has engaged with the EPA and Department of Agriculture to consider administrative changes to the Renewable Fuels Standard. I take these efforts quite seriously, not only as subcommittee chairman, but as the representative of a corn and soybean growing district in Southern Illinois that also happens to have oil refineries.

I believe that no matter how well intentioned ANY regulatory effort may be, the only way to get a lasting solution – especially one that will not spend more time in court than on the books – is by having Congress settle this issue in statute. I urge you, Mr. Administrator and the other members of the Executive Branch, to patiently work with us in good faith on a legislative solution to the RFS.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time and recognize the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Tonko for 5 minutes.