

Opening Statement

The Honorable Greg Walden

Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce

Hearing Entitled: “The Fiscal Year 2019 Environmental Protection Agency Budget”

April 26, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome back to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. Administrator. As you know, we scheduled this hearing to focus on the EPA’s policy and budget priorities. But you surely understand that members on both sides of the aisle also have serious questions the management and operations of the Agency. We expect you to answer these questions fully and truthfully.

I am concerned that the good progress being made on the policy front is being undercut by allegations about your management of the Agency and use of its resources. These issues are too persistent to ignore, and I know many members are looking for more clarity from you today. You will have ample opportunity today to provide us with any information. Additionally, while there are numerous ongoing investigations into these issues, I want you to commit to providing this Committee with all the same information you provide to the EPA Inspector General and other congressional committees.

Having said that, let me also say that I appreciate your good work to focus EPA on the mission Congress has tasked it with in statute: clean air for Americans to breathe, safe water for our citizens to drink, and soils free from pollution. As an example, I want to commend your efforts to reinvigorate the Superfund program, and specifically to accelerate the cleanup of the Willamette River at the Portland Harbor. Even your most liberal detractors applaud your efforts on this critical clean up.

I also appreciate your desire to rebalance the power between Washington, D.C. and the states, making our efforts more efficient and helping deliver tangible results to communities across the country. To truly succeed we need stronger local, state, federal and private partnerships where we can team up and leverage all available resources to accomplish the goals of cleaner water, air and soil.

Importantly, I appreciate your stated commitment to administer the law as Congress intended, and to have the Agency concentrate on its statutory obligations under environmental and public health laws, as well as the Administrative Procedures Act. Bringing new transparency to your public processes, especially when it comes to the data and science that underpins public policy, is truly a welcome change from the past practices at the EPA.

Mr. Administrator, too many of your predecessors believed a clean environment was incompatible with economic growth and job creation. I share your view that we can and must have both. We need common sense regulation that protects the public, actually cleans up the environment and does so in a way that doesn't unnecessarily suffocate the economy.

I believe the EPA should focus on innovative problem solving and partnerships with the states, the private sector, and other stakeholders that leverage their resources and expertise. I look forward to our discussion today about the Agency's budget and EPA's direction now and into the future.

As with our hearing five months ago, I remain interested in the goals you are establishing for the programs at EPA and the metrics you intend to use to measure their progress. Particularly, I noticed Objective #5 in the proposed budget discusses staffing and internal management issues. It is important that EPA not be bloated, but it is essential that EPA have staff with proper expertise implementing and enforcing programs that correlate with their experience. Finding that critical staffing balance is

one of the most important roles of anyone given the enormous task of managing a large, taxpayer-funded enterprise.

Finally, I want to applaud those objectives in the Agency's budget that reduce red-tape, result in the regulated community better knowing what is expected of them, and promote prompt, even, and fair enforcement of the law. I look forward to learning more about that today.

Again, thank you for being here today. I look forward to your testimony.