

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.**

Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2022 EPA Budget”

April 29, 2021

It is a pleasure to welcome EPA Administrator Michael Regan to this Committee for his first appearance – which I hope will be the first of many. Thanks to Administrator Regan and the leadership of President Biden, we can look at this year’s EPA budget with optimism about what we can achieve.

The Environmental Protection Agency is back to work protecting the planet and public health, and not a moment too soon. This country is facing multiple, overlapping crises and the EPA will play a critical role in solving them. We must collectively address the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, racial inequality, and the severe economic damage resulting from the pandemic.

These challenges are substantial, but fortunately the Biden Administration hit the ground running on day one. President Biden’s American Rescue Plan is already making a difference by crushing the virus and providing critical relief to struggling Americans. His American Jobs Plan, which aligns with this Committee’s LIFT America Act, will help us Build Back Better so we can create millions of new jobs, combat the climate crisis by setting the course for a clean future, and ensure no community is left behind.

And then last week, the President went even further, submitting a strong national commitment for the Paris Agreement that aligns with the national goal included in the CLEAN Future Act introduced by myself, Chairs Tonko and Rush, and many of my colleagues. Like the President, I believe the goal of reducing emissions by at least 50 percent by 2030 is necessary and achievable. This year’s EPA budget and the American Jobs Plan will help us get there.

The budget includes \$1.8 billion for EPA programs to fight climate change through funding for research, grants to state programs, and support of Agency activities. The investments in the American Jobs Plan go even further, with \$100 billion for power infrastructure and significant investments in reducing emissions from schools, vehicles, and federal buildings.

The budget also increases funding for Superfund and Brownfields cleanups, and, again, the American Jobs Plan goes even further, calling for reinstatement of the Superfund tax and investing \$5 billion in cleanups. We know that investing in Superfund cleanups creates jobs, mitigates threats to human health, and directly benefits the communities around contaminated sites, which are often low-income communities and communities of color.

And both the budget and the American Jobs Plan call for big investments in drinking water infrastructure, including the replacement of lead pipes, which is critical to addressing public health threats. This funding will be critical to drinking water infrastructure systems serving disadvantaged communities.

We are at a critical time for environmental protection. The impacts of climate change are already here, affecting communities across the nation and the world. PFAS and other emerging contaminants are showing up in our drinking water, air, and soil. Our water infrastructure is crumbling, and too many communities are struggling with lead contamination.

Unfortunately, over the course of the last Administration, we saw decades of work by EPA's dedicated career staff disregarded or overturned in critical areas of environmental and public health protection. We saw science marginalized. We saw special interests favored over the public interest. We saw secrecy at the highest levels of the Agency.

Administrator Regan, it falls to you to right this ship and restore the EPA to the highest standards of scientific integrity and pursuit of the public good.

We often say that a budget demonstrates the values and the priorities of the Administration proposing it. It is a relief to see a budget that so clearly demonstrates a commitment to public health, equity, and environmental stewardship. The American Jobs Plan and our new national commitment under the Paris Agreement make these priorities even clearer.

At last year's EPA budget hearing, during the last year of the Trump Administration, I said that there was a better path forward to combating climate change and protecting public health and the environment. I am happy to say that we are now on that path. We in Congress and on this Committee are ready to work with you to restore EPA, protect public health, and fight climate change.

Thank you, I yield back.