

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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Ranking Member Jamie Raskin Committee on Oversight and Accountability Opening Statement “Oversight of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency” July 10, 2024

Thank you kindly, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to Administrator Regan for joining us here today. It’s another brutal summer in Washington. But as we say on Capitol Hill, it’s not the heat, it’s the stupidity.

Americans today face the accelerating ravages of the climate crisis, including extreme heat waves. Last year was the hottest year on record in more than 100,000 years. And the hottest year before that was the prior year, and the hottest year before that was the year before that. So we’re talking about record extreme heat, record violent flooding, record wildfires, destroying millions of acres of land in the west, record velocity hurricanes and tornadoes.

And yet, a lot of our colleagues are still in denial. In fact, their Project 2025 plan for America would ban the use of the word “climate change.” They want to delete the possibility of even talking about climate change, much less taking any action on it. Millions of Americans are suffering the health effects of legacy pollution, dangerous air quality, and other kinds of toxic contamination. The work of the EPA has never been more urgent.

Under the presidential administration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the EPA has taken decisive action to put the health of the people before the profits of polluters and to confront climate change and toxic contamination of our communities. This includes new rules limiting pollution from coal and natural gas power plants. It includes a new rule limiting pollution from chemical plants that will reduce cancer risks for vulnerable communities, new rules for cars and trucks that will cut pollutants and reduce premature deaths, heart attacks, asthma, and fuel costs for Americans, and sweeping efforts to protect our population from lead and carcinogens in the drinking water.

Our colleagues who support a twice-impeached convicted felon for president would have us believe that EPA’s agenda is a radical one. The agenda we should be concerned about is Donald Trump’s radical, anti-science corporate polluter agenda, which he would give away to Big Gas and Big Coal and Big Oil for a billion dollars in campaign contributions.

The week before last, the Supreme Court gutted the Chevron doctrine, which will invite the justices now to impose their policy preferences over the agencies that are working to implement congressional will. And with last week’s *Corner Post* decision, the Court’s extremists rejected decades of precedent to open federal agencies up to what Supreme Court Justice Jackson described as a “tsunami of lawsuits” that threatened to devastate the functioning of the federal government. And these cases were backed by dark money corporate power interests,

including the Koch network and the Chamber of Commerce, both who come to lobby against environmental rules that are being adopted by the EPA.

These are just the latest GOP attacks on the environmental protections that Americans want and need. According to a recent Gallup poll, a sweeping majority of Americans believe climate change is real and that we need to act on pollution of our air and our water and destabilization of the climate. Yet, just two months ago, Trump met with Big Oil executives and lobbyists to sell out U.S. energy policy.

At a steak dinner, Trump told Big Oil and Big Gas CEOs that in exchange for a billion-dollar contribution to his campaign, he would roll back environmental rules that protect us from unchecked pollution by the fossil fuel industry. We sent a [letter](#) to the CEOs in order to get more information about what happened at that dinner. And I'm still hoping and waiting for our colleagues to join us in getting to the bottom of that.

The extremist Republican anti-environment agenda is laid out clearly in the infamous Project 2025 playbook, which would pick up where the Trump Administration left off by gutting clean energy programs, repealing environmental rules, and eviscerating the EPA's budget and staff and their ability to act against pollution.

To anybody who doubts the role that environmental rules and the EPA has played, I suggest looking at the Cuyahoga River near Cleveland, Ohio. In 1969, this river was one of the most polluted waterways in the country, and it actually caught on fire, a river caught on fire. That catastrophe and its health consequences led to the creation of the EPA and enactment of the Clean Water Act that our colleagues now want to undermine and destroy.

Here is what the Cuyahoga River looked like before the EPA existed. And this is the America that some politicians want us to go back to – a time when the rivers were so polluted that prolonged exposure to the water would result in an emergency room visit.

Now on the other hand, after decades of work with local and state governments and communities, here is what the Cuyahoga River looks like today. We can literally see the physical difference made by the work of the EPA. This is what we've been able to do with the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act and the muscular enforcement that both the right-wing MAGA court and the right-wing MAGA Congress want to destroy and reverse.

While extreme Republicans continue to prioritize Big Oil and corporate polluters over the health and safety of our people, and as our health environmental protections are dismantled before our eyes by the Supreme Court, it's essential that we back the EPA, and we sound the alarm about this attack on essential environmental regulations. The American people need to know the truth about what's at stake and what it means for our future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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