

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Subcommittee on the Interior

Opening Statement

Rep. Brenda Lawrence, Ranking Member

Hearing on February 26, 2015, 2:00 p.m.

“Examining the Impacts of EPA Air and Water Regulations on the States and the American People.”

Madame Chairwoman, I thank you for holding this hearing. I also want to thank our witnesses for their testimony today.

In a special message to Congress in 1970, President Nixon stated that “as concern with the condition of our physical environment has intensified, it has become increasingly clear that we need to know more about the total environment--land, water, and air. Indeed, the present governmental structure for dealing with environmental pollution often defies effective and concerted action. In proposing that the Environmental Protection Agency be set up as a separate new agency, I am making an exception to one of my own principles: that, as a matter of effective and orderly administration, additional new independent agencies normally should not be created. Because environmental protection cuts across so many jurisdictions, and because arresting environmental deterioration is of great importance to the quality of life in our country and the world, I believe that in this case a strong, independent agency is needed.”

I want to start by saying that EPA was not established to be red or blue – it was established to be green. To help us protect our environment, our citizens, and our children.

First, I would like to address The Clean Water Act, which has been successful in the past decades ensuring that Americans have clean and safe water. I believe that we can all agree that clean water is vital to each of us—for our drinking supply, for safe places to swim, for healthy fish, for growing crops, for beverage manufacturing, for energy generation and for a host of other uses. The proposed EPA rule would improve the process for determining what types of water are *and are not* covered by the Clean Water Act. Contrary to the claim of detractors, the rule will clarify protection for streams and wetlands that form the foundation of the nation’s water resources. It will not result in expansion of federal authority. Only waters that have been historically covered by the Clean Water Act are covered by the rule.

Turning our attention to addressing the dangers of ozone exposure is equally important. More than 1,000 new studies demonstrate the health and environmental harms of ozone. Exposure can cause difficulty breathing and airway inflammation. Ozone exposure is likely to cause premature death from lung or heart diseases. Children also suffer a disproportionate burden of ozone related health impacts because their lungs and other organs are still developing. Nearly 26 million people have asthma in the U.S., including almost 7.1 million children.

Fortunately, over 40 years ago, Congress passed the Clean Air Act to protect public health and the environment. Recently, EPA has proposed new Nation Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone to lower the ozone in the atmosphere from 75 parts per billion to a range of 65-70 parts per billion by the year 2030. The Clean Power Plan has also been proposed in order to limit the amount of carbon pollution power plants may emit. Likewise, the Waters of the United States rule was proposed to clarify which bodies of water are or are not covered by the Clean Water Act.

In developing these proposed rules, EPA engaged in extensive outreach to states, local government and industry to identify and address concerns. Millions of comments have been offered and are being considered before the final rule is proposed. EPA has also done a thorough job of assessing the economic and regulatory impact of the proposed rules.

That is the process Congress created for protecting the environment. And every time a new rule is proposed to protect public health and the environment, industry opposes it. The way they do that is through scare tactics. They say new health promoting regulations will be job-killing and business-destroying. Every time a new regulation is proposed, industry greets it with dire predictions of economic disaster. They file lawsuits, they lobby Congress and State governments, they sponsor studies to support their position.

Some make the same doomsday claims that have been made for decades and they follow a fairly reliable pattern: Whenever the government considers an environmental or safety regulation, manufacturers, energy companies and industry associations put out "studies" to evaluate the effects of the rules. These "studies" grossly overestimate the cost of complying with the regulation and generally understate or ignore the benefits. What's more, these "studies" inevitably conclude that the GDP will be lower and jobs or entire industries will be eliminated because of the regulation.

And history tells us that environmental regulations do not cause economic calamity. In fact, in the past forty years, the GDP has increased by 212% since the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts were enacted. Key air pollutants have been decreased by 70%. Instead of killing jobs like opponents had claimed, the pollution control industry has generated more than \$300 billion in revenues and \$44 billion in exports and supported 1.5 million jobs. None of the inflated costs of implementing the laws ever materialized. Industry innovated, improved and thrived in response to new demands.

There has been enormous progress in the past few decades to clean the air and water, but more work is necessary to adequately protect public health from ozone, excessive carbon dioxide and water pollution, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

I hope that we look at history and recognize the opposition of some industries is based on scare mongering. History shows us that cleaning the air and water are both good for public health AND the economy.

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