

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115
Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

September 26, 2017

Arthur A. Elkins, Jr.
Inspector General
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Elkins:

According to several news reports, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt and EPA staff have urged groups to publicly support the U.S. leaving the Paris climate change agreement. On August 1, 2017, I sent a letter to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) requesting a legal opinion on whether recent actions by Administrator Pruitt violated the Antideficiency Act¹ and the publicity or propaganda and anti-lobbying provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CSA) of 2017 during the time period before President Trump decided to pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate accord.²

Administrator Pruitt made many statements advocating for the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate accord. For example, at the April 2017 meeting between Administrator Pruitt and the National Mining Association,³ Mr. Pruitt reportedly called for the group to publicly support the U.S. exiting the Paris climate change agreement.⁴ Additionally, Politico reported that "Pruitt's staff also urged lawmakers and conservative groups to publicly criticize the agreement... which had the effect of increasing public pressure on Trump."⁵ Following Administrator Pruitt's meeting, National Mining Association executives voted to support the

¹ 31 USC § 1341.

² Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017, Pub. L. 115-31.

³ *The Energy 202: Pruitt Accused by Watchdog of Breaking Law by Bashing Paris Deal*, Washington Post (July 21, 2017).

⁴ *EPA Lobbies Coal Industry to Oppose Paris Climate Accord*, New York Magazine (Apr. 25, 2017).

⁵ *How Bannon and Pruitt Boxed Trump in on Climate Pact*, Politico (May 31, 2017).

U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate accord.⁶ These reports illustrate just a few examples of a potentially larger universe of actions by Administrator Pruitt and EPA staff that may have violated the Antideficiency Act and the CSA.

Prior to GAO conducting an analysis of whether recent actions by Administrator Pruitt violated the Antideficiency Act⁷ and the publicity or propaganda and anti-lobbying provisions of the CSA, it is necessary to establish a factual record. I therefore request the EPA Office of Inspector General develop a comprehensive factual record for instances where possible legal violations may have occurred, including the April 2017 meeting between Administrator Pruitt and the National Mining Association.

I appreciate your immediate attention to this matter. Should you have any questions about my request, please contact Jon Monger of the Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member

Cc: The Honorable Greg Walden

⁶ *Mining Group to Support Pulling Out of Paris After Meeting with Pruitt*, Politico (Apr. 25, 2017).

⁷ See note 1.