



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

DEMOCRATS

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CONTACT

Christine Brennan — (202) 225-5735

**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
Joint Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2017 EPA Budget”**

Thank you, Administrator McCarthy, for being here today to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency’s programs and budget. EPA’s work is critically important to protecting the health of our communities and our environment.

The President’s FY 2017 Budget funds the EPA at \$8.627 billion— a modest increase of \$127 million from the FY 2016 enacted level. This also adheres to the funding level approved as part of the bipartisan budget agreement in October. I support this increase, but it is important that we all recognize that far more resources are needed to properly address all of the environmental issues facing our nation today. A clean environment is essential to public health and to a strong economy.

It’s also important to recognize that EPA’s budget represents a small portion of the overall federal budget – less than one quarter of one percent. We should also remember that EPA shares over 40 percent of its funding with the states and tribes to help them implement federal environmental laws and achieve national goals. These funds support local economies and communities big and small.

The recent drinking water crises across the nation demonstrate how important it is to invest in our drinking water systems. I commend the President for increasing the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) by nearly \$160 million. Our drinking water systems need more funding to help provide clean and safe drinking water to communities. While I am happy to see this funding increase, I must re-iterate that so much more is needed. The Drinking Water SRF has been underfunded for years. According to EPA’s most recent Needs Survey, \$385 billion is needed over the next 20 years to modernize and repair our drinking water systems. We should be working together to make these critical investments to ensure the health of our communities. We have reached a point where essential water and waste infrastructure needs repair and replacement. We simply cannot allow this essential infrastructure to deteriorate further. If we do, we are going to be forced to spend more when a crisis occurs. The longer we delay, the more expensive it will become to fix.

The President's Budget also provides an increase of nearly \$68 million for climate and air quality-related initiatives, which I support. We should be investing in programs that build climate resiliency and reduce the impacts of extreme weather events. I especially appreciate EPA's plans to help communities integrate climate adaptation policies to help them address our changing climate and plan for the future.

In addition, the President's Budget increases funding by nearly \$40 million for the clean-up of Superfund and Brownfield sites across the country. These are vital programs for protecting human and environmental health, while also creating jobs and improving the economy. As of March 1, the Brownfields program has created more than 100,000 jobs, and, in the first two months of this year, has revitalized over 4,500 acres of land.

While I appreciate EPA's efforts, the remaining Superfund and Brownfield sites are becoming more complicated to clean-up and with limited resources, the time and cost to complete this work is extended significantly. With so many people living near contaminated sites, we must continue providing robust support for these programs. Cleanup of these sites transforms them from liabilities to assets that generate needed revenues and economic opportunity.

Finally, I'd like to voice one area of concern—proposed cuts to the BEACH Act Grant Program. As someone elected to represent part of the Jersey Shore, I understand the importance of protecting and improving the quality of our beaches and their importance to local economies. I am disappointed that, once again, your budget eliminates funding for this critical program, and I'm troubled by EPA's apparent lack of concern over potential for waterborne pathogens or pollution affecting coastal recreation and public health. This program deserves continued support, and I will work with my colleagues to ensure adequate funding.

I look forward to hearing your testimony, Administrator McCarthy. Thank you.

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