

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Minerals Ranking Member
Paul D. Tonko

Hearing on “Fiscal Year 2024 Environmental Protection Agency Budget Request”

May 10, 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Administrator Regan, for joining us. It is good to see you back at the Subcommittee for today’s discussion of President Biden’s Fiscal Year 2024 budget request.

We know the EPA has awesome responsibilities to protect public health and the environment.

And more and more Americans are becoming increasingly aware of, and concerned by, environmental threats, including the danger of unmitigated climate change, the damage that can be caused by lead and PFAS in drinking water, and the risks from industrial accidents and chemical spills.

The \$12 billion budget request before Congress will allow EPA to fulfill its mission and address these and other pressing environmental challenges related to climate change, clean air, clean water, chemical safety, land remediation, and environmental justice.

This funding will also help ensure effective administration of the historic funding that has already been provided to the Agency over the past two years.

I am so proud of the legislative successes of the 117th Congress.

And I am especially proud that many of the EPA policies and programs included in those laws were developed and championed by Democratic members of this Committee.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included around \$60 billion for EPA, which will enable the Agency to make significant investments in our nation’s crumbling water infrastructure, replace lead service lines, remediate Superfund and brownfield sites, and deploy fleets of electric school buses across the country.

But that is not all we accomplished.

The Inflation Reduction Act included over \$41 billion for EPA, which will address climate pollution, including methane and HFCs, and enhance environmental justice.

These funds have the potential to reduce pollution and create jobs in every community across the country.

I have no doubt that these laws will improve people's lives, but I also acknowledge that there is still more work to do.

And that starts by investing in the EPA itself by growing its workforce to meet the scale of our nation's environmental challenges, enabling the Agency to carry out effective regulatory and enforcement agendas while providing robust technical and financial assistance to states, local and tribal governments, schools, and community-based organizations.

I have the utmost respect for EPA's career employees, and I hope the Agency's management will do everything in their power to support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of these public servants.

So, I was very happy to see the President's budget requests over 1,900 new FTEs to ensure EPA is able to operate at full capacity.

Finally, it is critical that EPA builds upon the historic IIJA and IRA funding by pursuing complementary and ambitious enforcement and regulatory agendas.

EPA has significant, existing legal authorities to tackle climate and traditional air pollution from power plants and vehicles, keep PFAS chemicals out of commerce, and get the lead out of our water systems more quickly.

I will continue to strongly encourage EPA to develop and finalize a suite of ambitious public health protections over this next year.

Of course, this regulatory agenda must be driven by sound science.

And these scientific efforts must be built on robust implementation of EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy, which ensures employees can conduct their research and analysis free from interference by political and special interests.

EPA is one of our great Federal science agencies, and its workforce must be confident it can carry out its scientific mission without fear of being undermined.

Administrator Regan, thank you again for joining us. I look forward to working with you as EPA carries out its responsibilities, including implementing IIJA and IRA funding to protect public health and the environment, and developing a complementary regulatory agenda.

I yield back.