



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

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## **Pallone Statement at Hearing with EPA Administrator Pruitt**

**Washington, D.C.** – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittee on the Environment hearing on “The Mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency” with Administrator Scott Pruitt:*

I have served in Congress alongside both Democratic and Republican Administrations, and in my experience the lack of transparency and cooperation from this Administration is completely unprecedented.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under Administrator Pruitt has consistently failed to respond to Congressional oversight requests. In the few instances when we have actually received responses, they are perfunctory, at best. EPA has also refused to testify at legislative and oversight hearings, and has refused to respond to some basic requests for technical assistance on legislation that has moved or is moving its way through this Committee.

Even today, after finally agreeing to appear before his authorizing committee some 10 months into his term, Administrator Pruitt is planning to leave after only one hour. This is NOT the way any agency is supposed to interact with its authorizing committee. I would hope this frustration is not only felt by Committee Democrats, and would hope to see a change from both EPA and the overall Trump Administration.

This lack of transparency applies not just to Congress, but also to the press, the public, and even EPA’s career staff. The stories coming from the Agency paint a bleak picture.

While we know the Administrator has wasted more than \$58,000 of taxpayer money on private jets and noncommercial flights, Mr. Pruitt’s schedule has been largely kept secret, and this week a major newspaper had to sue the agency for access to this important public record.

Meanwhile, EPA career staff have been excluded from meetings. When they do participate, they are apparently blocked from bringing phones and even pen and paper with them.

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Moreover, Administrator Pruitt has reportedly used \$25,000 of public funds to build a secret phone booth in his office, to further isolate himself from his staff and any and all scrutiny. Why all the secrecy? One has to wonder.

Administrator Pruitt has also launched an unprecedented assault on independent science, purging academic scientists with no conflicts from science advisory boards and replacing them with industry employees. At the same time, he has ignored the advice and conclusions of his own scientific staff on numerous occasions.

Today's hearing is supposedly about the mission of the EPA. According to the EPA itself, the agency's mission is to protect human health and the environment. No one cares more about that mission than EPA's career staff. Ignoring the staff, undermining the staff, and cutting the staff out of decisions amounts to ignoring and undermining that mission.

Administrator Pruitt has been on a press tour lately, proclaiming his vision of what the EPA's mission means and what it means to be an environmentalist. Yet, his words ring hollow because his actions have consistently and systematically undermined protections for human health and the environment.

I only have five minutes, so I can't list all of the actions the Administrator has taken to undermine protections for public health, and specifically for vulnerable populations including workers, children, and Native American tribes.

Here's just a few examples ----

- Pulling out of the Paris Agreement;
- Rolling back the Clean Power Plan;
- Rolling back protections from toxic air pollutants including mercury, methane, and smog;
- Handing implementation of the toxic chemicals reform law, just signed into law last year, over to industry lobbyists;
- Reversing the decision to ban the toxic pesticide chlorpyrifos;
- Delaying and undermining the Risk Management Planning program that should protect workers and communities; and
- Reversing course on Superfund financial assurance requirements, putting more of the burden on taxpayers and less on polluters.

With accomplishments like these, it's no wonder that the Administrator is working so hard to hide his actions.

But the American people need transparency and they deserve honesty, from the EPA and the White House.

Perhaps today's hearing will be the beginning of a new, more transparent era. To his credit, Administrator Pruitt reached out to me in advance of this hearing and requested a meeting.

But if the Administrator wants to improve his relationships with the members of this Committee, the steps he needs to take are clear. He needs to provide the documents we

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have requested and will request in the future. He needs to provide substantive answers to our oversight questions. And he needs to make himself and other EPA staff available as witnesses routinely.

And, if the Administrator wants to earn the trust of the American people, he needs to stop the secrecy, end his war on science, and reverse the systematic rollback of public health protections. It is the mission of the EPA to protect public health and the environment, not attack it.

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