

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change Chairman Paul D. Tonko**  
  
***Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2022 EPA Budget”***

**April 29, 2021**

Today we have the pleasure of welcoming the recently confirmed 16<sup>th</sup> Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Michael S. Regan, to the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. Administrator, congratulations on your confirmation and welcome to the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change. We look forward to your testimony and discussion of the President’s Fiscal Year 2022 budget request and other EPA priorities.

While you have only recently joined the Agency, I know you are fully aware of the critical role EPA must play in leading our nation’s response to some of the biggest public health, environmental, and economic challenges we now face.

None of these challenges will be easy, but I am hopeful that we are entering a new era at EPA.

And this re-set could not come at a more urgent moment for America or the world.

The President’s Fiscal Year 2022 Discretionary Funding Request requests \$11.2 billion for the Agency, a \$2 billion increase from last year’s enacted levels.

The President’s request highlights several priorities, including \$1.8 billion for programs to tackle the climate crisis in ways that also promote and restore environmental justice, \$3.6 billion for our nation’s long-neglected water systems— many of which are contaminated with PFAS, lead, and other dangerous substances, robust funding for Superfund and brownfield remediation projects, and increased air quality monitoring and enforcement in overburdened communities.

As we work to recover from the COVID public health crisis, we must not take our eye off the many environmental threats facing countless American communities. EPA must act boldly to advance robust policies on climate change, clean water, chemical safety, and land remediation.

This agenda will certainly require increased staffing to meet the nation’s needs, a challenge compounded by the loss of nearly 1,000 EPA employees over the past four years.

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Today, the Agency's workforce is at its lowest level since 1988, even as we are expecting EPA to play such a critical role in addressing numerous, complicated public health and environmental challenges.

There is a clear need to rebuild the Agency's staff capacity and attract new, talented people to public service, both to get the job done today and to allow for an effective transfer of institutional knowledge to a new generation of public servants from the current long-term EPA workers who are nearing retirement.

I was happy to see funding in the budget for this purpose. A fully staffed EPA workforce is essential to protecting human health and the environment, enforcing our environmental laws, and tackling climate change.

I have also been impressed to see the Biden Administration's recommitment to strong scientific integrity principles.

Our public health and environmental protections must be grounded in robust science. Ensuring that EPA career staffers can conduct their work and develop rules based on sound science, free from interference from political and special interests, is a cornerstone for good, trustworthy governance at the Agency.

This should be the case regardless of which party sits in the White House, and I look forward to working with the Administration to strengthen and codify all agencies' scientific integrity policies.

Finally, in addition to this EPA budget request, President Biden has proposed the American Jobs Plan.

This Subcommittee has the opportunity and responsibility to make tremendous contributions to the American Jobs Plan, or any other infrastructure package being considered in Congress.

The AJP includes funding for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, full lead service line replacements, remediation of brownfields and Superfund sites, and reduction of diesel emissions through DERA and deployment of zero-emission school buses.

These programs have enjoyed strong bipartisan support in the past, and significant investments in these areas will benefit people and communities in every district across the country.

I am looking forward to pursuing this agenda to protect public health and the environment while modernizing our nation's infrastructure and jumpstarting our post-COVID economic recovery.

Mr. Regan, I thank you again for joining us. I look forward to today's discussion.