

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH 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) 225-3641
Minority (202) 225-2927

July 8, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

On June 30, we received a letter signed by hundreds of Environment Protection Agency (EPA) employees that detailed your efforts to “undermine the EPA mission of protecting human health and the environment.”¹ The letter also described your numerous abuses of office, which have harmed communities, set back science, and damaged the culture at EPA.² These courageous staff have blown the whistle and confirmed our concerns with the myriad, senseless cuts and arbitrary changes that you have made at EPA during your tenure.

Instead of reflecting on these good-faith, constructive critiques, you have brazenly retaliated against at least 139 signatories by illegally placing them on administrative leave and, through a spokesperson, falsely calling their actions “unlawful.”³ It is deeply disturbing to see you blatantly break the law while baselessly accusing others of misconduct.⁴

Your retaliation against these signatory-whistleblowers is plainly illegal. The Whistleblower Protection Act protects individuals—like the signers of the letter—who provide information to Congress and others about gross mismanagement, gross waste of federal funds, abuse of authority, and danger to public health and safety.⁵ Among other serious concerns, the letter specifically describes actions that you have taken to “endanger public health,” harm

¹ Stand Up For Science, *Join with Us in Supporting the EPA Staff* (<https://www.standupforscience.net/epa-declaration>) (accessed July 8, 2025).

² *Id.*

³ *US Environmental Agency Puts 139 Employees on Leave After They Criticized Trump’s Policies*, Reuters (July 4, 2025).

⁴ *EPA Places Staffers Who Signed ‘Dissent’ Letter on Leave*, The Hill (July 3, 2025).

⁵ 5 U.S.C. § 2302(a)(2)(D).

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communities that “are consistently exposed to disproportionate environmental and climate burdens,” and abuse your authority by “promoting a culture of fear” at EPA.⁶

In response, at least 139 staffers were placed on administrative leave and an email to affected EPA staff specified that leave was “pending administrative investigation.”⁷ In addition, an EPA spokesperson declared “a zero-tolerance policy for career bureaucrats unlawfully undermining, sabotaging, and undercutting the administration’s agenda,” effectively concluding and publicly announcing that these individuals had somehow violated the law *before* an investigation was even conducted. Taking adverse actions against employees for making a protected disclosure—including investigating them and placing them on administrative leave—in a manner that deters others from coming forward is a textbook violation of the Whistleblower Protection Act.

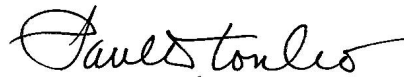
You must stop abusing your office and return these employees to their regular status immediately. Additionally, you must provide Committee staff with a briefing on the alleged basis for your illegal action and how you intend to ensure compliance with the Whistleblower Protection Act going forward. We will also be sharing this letter with EPA’s Office of Inspector General and asking that it conduct an investigation into this illegal activity.

We expect a prompt response and encourage EPA staff who have been retaliated against to contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-2927 or ECDemTips@mail.house.gov.

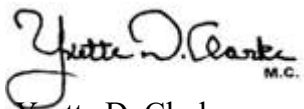
Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Paul D. Tonko
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment



Yvette D. Clarke
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

⁶ See note 1.

⁷ See note 3.

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cc: The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman

The Honorable H. Morgan Griffith
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Gary Palmer
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations