

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
of**

**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Ranking Member Yvette D. Clarke**

***Hearing on “Corrosion, Collapse, and Clean-Up: Examining the Potomac Interceptor Collapse”***

**May 20, 2026**

On January 19, part of the Potomac Interceptor collapsed, releasing more than 200 million gallons of raw sewage into the Potomac River, resulting in one of the worst sewage overflows in U.S. history. Thankfully, DC Water and federal partners quickly contained the overflow and made emergency repairs to stop the spill. So far, the emergency response appears to have been successful, but there are important lessons that need to be learned to prevent crises like these in our communities.

Unfortunately, this appears to have been an avoidable emergency. It has long been known that segments of the more than 60-year-old Potomac Interceptor were corroding and needed repairs. Like many other water utilities with aging infrastructure, DC Water was aware the Potomac Interceptor needed repairs and had a plan to make those repairs. But it did not get done in time.

The Potomac Interceptor collapse is not unique. It represents a common problem in America: crumbling infrastructure. EPA records tens of thousands of sewer overflows each year that release raw sewage into our communities and waterways. EPA does not even count how often sewer backups spill raw sewage into Americans’ homes and businesses. Any pollution released into the Potomac River risks significant local, regional, and even national consequences.

The coordinated response appears to have addressed the mess that was caused by the collapse. However, they have ignored the President Trump’s decision to demolish the East Wing of the White House to make way for a ‘golden ballroom’ and looked away as Trump dumped the rubble, which contained lead and other toxic metals, in a national park surrounded by the Potomac River. Republicans have even defended the President’s Budget request which proposes enormous cuts to the very EPA water programs that help prevent incidents like the Potomac Interceptor collapse.

President Trump’s pro-pollution agenda is creating harmful messes all over the place. We do not have the luxury of ignoring pollution in our communities or our national parks, whether it is dumped there by the President, the result of a sewage spill, or due to administration giveaways to polluters. We will not prevent another Potomac Interceptor collapse—or any other sewage spills—by cutting the EPA programs that help prevent them. And we are not doing enough by having a hearing on this one collapse. We should be having oversight hearings on all the ways the Trump administration is allowing polluters to make our air and water less healthy and why

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the President thought it was OK to knock down a third of the White House and dump it in a public park.

This is only the tenth hearing in the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee this Congress. This is only the third hearing in this Subcommittee this year. Congressional Republicans have allowed President Trump to make life less affordable, health care less attainable, and our air and water more polluted.

This Republican Congress has become a rubber stamp for matters as big as war and as petty as a vanity ballroom project, which the President seems to care more about than the wellbeing of Americans. And this Subcommittee should be asking bigger questions and more questions than just what we're covering at this hearing.

I appreciate the witnesses for being here and look forward to hearing what lessons we can learn from this incident. But I can't imagine the solution here is to cut EPA funding, give the President money for his ballroom, or just suck it up and pay more at the pump without demanding answers.

Thank you, I yield back.