

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery of Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “The Fiscal Year 2027 Environmental Protection Agency Budget”

April 28, 2026

President Trump’s budget is an insult to the American people. At every opportunity, this budget undercuts public health, affordability, and sensible environmental protections to line the pockets of Trump’s corporate polluter friends.

The budget would cut funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by more than 50 percent – the largest cut in EPA’s history. This would hamstring EPA’s ability to fulfill its core mission of protecting human health and the environment. Despite claims to the contrary, it fails to deliver on the Trump Administration’s promise to Make America Healthy Again.

The budget eliminates nearly all state categorical grants, all but ending the cooperative federalism that has made EPA so successful in cleaning up toxic pollution and providing healthier futures for Americans. EPA is deserting the states to deal with serious climate and pollution issues on their own, while EPA focuses on giving polluters free passes to poison our communities with reckless abandon.

The budget also takes a sledgehammer to the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs), which are the primary funding sources for water infrastructure projects. At a time when communities are experiencing aging infrastructure and rising water costs, and are fearful of threats of contamination, these funds are critical to ensure all communities have access to safe, affordable water. The Trump Administration clearly doesn’t recognize this value, especially when you consider EPA’s plans to rescind and delay the historic PFAS drinking water standards that were put in place during the Biden Administration to protect public health.

Under Administrator Zeldin, the EPA is going in a dangerously wrong direction. At every turn, Administrator Zeldin has demonstrated that he is at the beck and call of special interests — providing broad exemptions and handouts to his polluter friends. He has eliminated EPA’s climate and clean air work, turned his back on environmental justice communities, and looked the other way as bad actors poison communities across America.

What is potentially most egregious is EPA’s shockingly irresponsible rollback of the landmark Endangerment Finding – which has no basis in law, science, or reality – especially in 2026. EPA is abandoning its responsibility to protect human health and the environment from the harm of air pollution, replacing it with nothing. Ensuring the climate crisis gets far worse puts the health of Americans in jeopardy, will result in even higher food and electricity than we are also seeing due to the Republican affordability crisis, and will put homeownership even further out of reach as unchecked pollution wreaks havoc on property values, insurance rates, and jobs. It will also cause cascading consequences across all sectors of our economy. And at a time when Trump’s reckless war of choice with Iran has already caused gas prices to skyrocket, EPA eliminated all clean vehicle standards and incentives, increasing costs on families and businesses when they can least afford it – a fact that EPA conveniently ignores.

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Simultaneously, the Zeldin EPA has slashed critical protections by leaving radioactive coal ash in unlined ponds in communities, reversing limits on cancer causing ethylene oxide pollution in cities, and allowing the chemical industry to burn plastic. From the agency tasked with protecting our public health and safety, these rollbacks cater to the whims of polluting interests while American communities pay the price.

Finally, the effectiveness of the agency hinges on EPA having the career staff necessary to fulfill its mission. They are the backbone of the agency. Yet, Administrator Zeldin's actions to indiscriminately fire hundreds of employees, and retaliate against those who raised concerns about the mismanagement of the agency, show a blatant disregard for the critical work career staff conduct on behalf of the American people every day. He has created such a toxic and hostile environment for career staff that EPA has lost about a quarter of its staff since Trump assumed office. That doesn't make government more efficient – it decimates EPA's ability to effectively do its job.

EPA's mission is to protect human health and the environment. That should be its north star. Yet at every turn, Administrator Zeldin has placed polluters favors over the needs of the people the agency is tasked with protecting. The agency should be taking action to protect our air, water, and public health, but unfortunately, it seems the Administrator's legacy will be selling the health of Americans to the highest bidder.

And with that I yield back the balance of my time.