

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of**

Subcommittee on Environment Ranking Member Paul Tonko

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

April 28, 2026

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Administrator Zeldin, welcome back to the Subcommittee. The Fiscal Year 2027 budget request proposes a more than 52% cut to EPA. This includes a 91% reduction to categorical grants that states rely upon to support implementation of environmental laws.

The EPA’s budget claims it will empower states through cooperative federalism. But we all know what this really is— cost shifting— requiring states to find more revenue to carry out federal requirements at a time when costs from Medicaid, nutrition assistance, and other programs are being passed onto their budgets.

This budget request also claims to return primary responsibility for water infrastructure to state and local governments, and it includes a nearly 90% reduction to the State Revolving Funds— over \$2.5 billion— which local governments rely upon to finance water system projects. This budget completely fails to recognize that the federal government is currently responsible for a whopping 4% of water systems’ capital and operating expenses.

96% of water utility expenses are paid by non-federal sources, primarily customers. If the federal government further reduces its financial commitment, people inevitably will see their water bills go up, especially as systems work to reduce risks from lead, PFAS, and other public health threats. It is an understatement to say that I am concerned by the direction of the EPA, and I believe the American people are right to be concerned, too.

Let’s just look at the agency’s track record on protecting people from dangerous chemicals. The Trump Administration’s first MAHA Commission report correctly identified industry capture of EPA’s chemical safety program as a problem. Today there are several political appointees running EPA’s chemical safety program who previously worked for the chemical industry, and I suspect they will return to lucrative jobs working for the industry at the end of this Administration.

And why do I suspect this? Because some of these very same people also worked in the chemical safety office during first Trump Administration and then went on to work on behalf of chemical manufacturers during the Biden Administration.

With such strong past financial ties— and the high likelihood that their future incomes will come from the companies they are charged with regulating today— can there be any doubt why people are suspicious that this EPA may not put the health and safety of regular Americans over the interests of powerful chemical and pesticide manufacturers? This is to say nothing of the industry representatives and industry-paid consultants who have been appointed to EPA science advisory bodies.

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Inevitably, empowering people with such obvious and deep financial connections to regulated industries erodes public confidence in the agency's willingness to be an effective regulator. And this is a problem that can be found across program offices.

Last year, Administrator Zeldin announced a major deregulatory agenda, despite analysis that the rules targeted for repeal were estimated to save thousands of American lives and billions of dollars each year. Time and time again, we have seen that to effectuate this agenda, EPA has needed to change its cost-benefit rules and ignore agency and independent analyses that has not agreed with the Administrator's pre-determined outcomes.

In January, EPA announced it would stop considering the value of lives saved from putting limits on air pollution. EPA ignored its own analysis that a rollback of limits on mercury pollution threatens public health and imposes costs on Americans. EPA also ignored its analysis of the revocation of the endangerment finding, which found that the costs of the action would outweigh any savings.

President Trump has issued sweeping exemptions to entire industries from complying with hazardous air pollution standards, which were granted with no transparency and seemingly no analysis of how they might harm public health. And to repeal vehicle standards, EPA's analysis found that elimination of these standards would increase consumer costs and gas prices, adding \$3 billion per year in fuel costs by 2035 for American drivers. And you can bet that EPA took a rosy estimate of future gas prices. It certainly did not account for President Trump's illegal war with Iran, which has raised average gas prices to over \$4.10 per gallon.

This deregulatory agenda is giving Americans the privilege of paying more to have worse health outcomes. Because apparently, in the Trump Administration, the only costs worth considering are how much environmental protections will affect polluting corporations' bottom lines. EPA's budget cuts and deregulatory actions will result in more pollution while reducing our scientific capacity to understand how that pollution will impact Americans' health and well-being. I find that unacceptable, and I believe most Americans would agree.

Thank you. I yield back.