

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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October 13th, 2026

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Administrator Zeldin,

Agencies are required to comply with congressional oversight. It is an obligation, not a choice. But under your leadership, the EPA appears to have forgotten that basic principle. Since President Trump took office in January 2025, I have made multiple requests to the agency for internal records, documents, and communications related to various topics. These oversight requests are crucial to my ability to properly carry out my oversight duties as the Ranking Member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, which possesses jurisdiction over environmental research and development programs at EPA. However, rather than providing the requested information in a comprehensive and timely manner, EPA has failed to produce a single responsive document, communication, or record. Instead, the agency has merely responded with letters that deflect questions rather than answering them. That was never acceptable. It becomes less tolerable with each passing month. I am writing to you to reaffirm my prior oversight requests from the 119th Congress, and to formally notify the agency that they remain outstanding. I expect EPA to promptly comply.

Since your confirmation as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on January 29th, 2025,¹ roughly 20% of the agency's workforce has quit, retired, or been fired.² Irreplaceable laboratory facilities have been shut down.³ The independent Office of Research and Development (ORD) has been wiped out.⁴ Scientific capacity has been gutted,⁵ scientific

¹ https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_votes/vote1191/vote_119_1_00024.htm.

² <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2026/02/20/year-end-data-reveals-extent-of-trump-agency-purges-00791158>.

³ <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2025/06/trump-epa-shutters-premiere-air-pollution-research-facility-00394904>.

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/27/climate/epa-science-trump-cuts.html>.

⁵ <https://www.eenews.net/articles/epa-sets-no-surprises-science-policy-reassigns-researchers/>.

integrity is compromised,⁶ industry capture is widespread,⁷ and climate denialism is ascendant.⁸ In short, EPA's basic mission to use the best available science to protect human health and the environment has been damaged under your leadership.

To take just one of countless examples, I have learned that the Office of Air and Radiation (OAR), acting under direct orders from former Assistant Administrator Aaron Szabo, has refused to grant the Office of Applied Sciences and Environmental Solutions (OASES) permission to conduct or publish virtually any air pollution research without prior approval from OAR political leadership. OASES is the ostensible successor to ORD, which was a global scientific leader in air quality and air pollution research. It is my understanding that OAR has categorically denied OASES the authority to conduct and publish its own air-related research without OAR political approval, except for narrow circumstances in which technical support from OASES cannot be avoided for OAR to meet certain statutory obligations. Indeed, OASES cannot even independently initiate air-related research without approval from OAR political appointees. OAR can only assert this control because of the agency's new "no surprises" policy for OASES, which appallingly requires that OASES research "must be supported by appropriate political leadership" before it can proceed.⁹ The policy is a clear violation of scientific integrity, and the notion that EPA's primary science office cannot even study air pollution without getting permission from the political appointees of a different office would be laughable if it was not so dangerous.

In my role as the Ranking Member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology ("the Committee"), I have attempted to conduct oversight of these types of actions. There are many reasons for this oversight: to document the damage done to the agency and its workforce; to understand the scientific capabilities that have been lost and the implications of those losses for human health and the American people; to identify violations of scientific integrity and administrative procedure; and to comprehend why all of this happened in order to inform legislative efforts to reverse it and prevent it from ever happening again. Since January 2025, I have sent a number of formal oversight letters to EPA requesting agency records, documents, and communications regarding various policies and activities. The agency has been non-responsive to my requests and has utterly failed to comply. I am now reaffirming these oversight requests to provide the agency with a second opportunity to demonstrate the appropriate degree of deference and respect for congressional prerogatives. I expect EPA's full and prompt responsiveness to each of the requests detailed below, which are long overdue:

1. Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans (ARRPs)

On March 26th, 2025, I sent a letter to EPA along with several other Democratic Committee Members requesting that the agency "provide the Committee with your Agency RIF and Reorganization Plan immediately upon transmitting it to OMB and the Office of Personnel

⁶ <https://www.eenews.net/articles/epa-sets-no-surprises-science-policy-reassigns-researchers/>.

⁷ <https://www.eenews.net/articles/fundamental-conflict-ethics-holds-on-trump-epa-chemicals-officials-lift/>.

⁸ <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/04/08/zeldin-stars-at-climate-denial-conference-00863533>.

⁹ <https://www.eenews.net/articles/epa-sets-no-surprises-science-policy-reassigns-researchers/>.

Management (OPM).”¹⁰ The context for this request was the revelation that EPA’s ARRP proposed to “eliminate the Office of Research and Development as an EPA National Program Office” while pushing “a majority (50-75%)” of ORD’s employees out of the agency.¹¹ Of course, that is exactly what happened. But EPA never provided its Phase One and Phase Two ARRPs to the Committee, which has hindered the Committee’s ability to understand the motivations and decisions that led to the elimination of ORD. For instance, information revealed last year in a lawsuit related to agency ARRPs appeared to suggest that disagreements may have existed between EPA and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding the elimination of ORD.¹² Without reviewing the ARRPs themselves, the Committee cannot properly assess the agency’s position towards ORD and the bureaucratic actions that contributed to its demise.

2. Laboratory Budget and Staffing Levels

On May 27th, 2025, I sent a letter to EPA along with Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Gabe Amo requesting that the agency “share the projected post-reorganization budget and staffing levels for each of the facilities that will remain open.”¹³ The “facilities” in this case referred specifically to the ten field laboratory and research facilities managed by ORD. These research laboratories are a crown jewel of EPA science, and the agency’s intention to eliminate ORD had raised the alarming prospect that the laboratories might be shut down as well. EPA has not subsequently acted to do so, and the laboratories appear to be continuing under the management of different program offices. But while I am relieved that they continue to operate, I remain concerned that staffing shortages and reduced scientific capabilities at the former ORD laboratories could undermine their ability to appropriately study environmental hazards. EPA’s unwillingness to provide basic budgetary and personnel information for its research laboratories impedes the Committee’s ability to evaluate whether they remain capable of supporting core agency activities.

3. Endangerment Finding Repeal Documents and Communications

On August 18th, 2025, I sent a letter to EPA along with Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Amo requesting that the agency provide “all documents and communications” exchanged between EPA and OMB, the Department of Energy (DOE), and the Trump Vance 2025 Transition Team, regarding “the repeal of the Endangerment Finding.”¹⁴ I also requested “all documents and communications” exchanged between EPA and DOE regarding the report developed by DOE’s Climate Working Group, and “all documents and communications” within EPA regarding “the agency’s review of the scientific basis for the proposal to repeal the Endangerment Finding.”¹⁵ These oversight requests relate to the repeal of the 2009 Greenhouse

¹⁰ <https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/committee-members-demand-epa-administrator-stop-plans-to-close-office-of-research-and-development>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² <https://insideepa.com/daily-news/judge-poised-halt-rifs-reorganization-amid-white-house-epa-clash>.

¹³ <https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/science-committee-leaders-demand-answers-on-trump-administrations-illegal-scheme-to-shutter-epa-ord-labs>.

¹⁴ <https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/committee-leaders-lofgren-and-ammo-demand-answers-from-trump-administration-regarding-process-to-repeal-endangerment-finding>.

¹⁵ *Id.*

Gas Endangerment Finding, which the agency proposed in July 2025 and finalized in February 2026.¹⁶ I continue to have concerns about potential violations of administrative law in the agency's rulemaking process to repeal the Endangerment Finding. The documents and communications that I requested are central to the Committee's ability to conduct oversight of the agency's actions. EPA's refusal to provide them only strengthens my belief that these records remain highly material to my review and must be disclosed without delay.

4. Status of PFNA IRIS Assessment

Dr. Maureen Gwinn, the EPA Deputy Associate Administrator for Science, testified before the Science Committee's Subcommittee on Environment on June 4th, 2026.¹⁷ The subject of her testimony was OASES and the general status of environmental research and development at the agency after the elimination of ORD. During that hearing, I questioned Dr. Gwinn about the agency's decision earlier in 2026 to disavow chemical assessments conducted by the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS).¹⁸ In particular, I asked about the status of the IRIS assessment for PFNA, which press reports indicate has been fully completed for more than a year but which the agency refuses to finalize and publish.¹⁹ In response, Dr. Gwinn told me that she was "not sure of the details on that" and said that she would "have to get back to you."²⁰ She also stated that she would "go back and confirm" the status of the PFNA assessment.²¹ While that hearing took place over four months ago, the agency has not provided any subsequent information regarding the PFNA assessment and whether it ever intends to finalize and publish the assessment, nor has it offered any scientific justification for refusing to do so. I continue to seek clarity on whether the IRIS assessment for PFNA, a dangerous and highly toxic PFAS chemical, will ever see the light of day under this administration.

5. Administration Delays of Environmental Research

At the same June 4th Environment Subcommittee hearing with Dr. Gwinn, one of my colleagues, Representative Suzanne Bonamici, questioned Dr. Gwinn about whether the agency under its current leadership had sought to delay or suppress any environmental research due to its perceived lack of alignment with administration priorities. Specifically, Representative Bonamici asked whether "any proposed research products, even one, [had] been delayed, modified, or declined because they did not align with the priorities set by political appointees?" In response, Dr. Gwinn acknowledged that "there have been delays" due to the agency's review of whether certain research products complied with President Trump's various Executive Orders.²² But when Representative Bonamici followed up and directly asked "what was the topic of the research," pertaining to research that had been halted, Dr. Gwinn could only respond that she would "have

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/feb/12/trump-epa-rollback-pollution-regulation-endangerment-finding>.

¹⁷ <https://science.house.gov/2026/6/environment-subcommittee-hearing-advancing-environmental-protection-through-science-and-technology>.

¹⁸ <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-epa-directive-chemical-assessments>.

¹⁹ <https://www.propublica.org/article/epa-pfna-forever-chemical-report>.

²⁰ <https://science.house.gov/2026/6/environment-subcommittee-hearing-advancing-environmental-protection-through-science-and-technology>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

to get back to you on that.”²³ The agency has not provided any further information regarding which specific research topics were “delayed, modified, or declined” due to the political directives of agency leadership. This information is highly material to the Committee’s ability to understand the current state of scientific integrity at EPA, as well as the role played by political appointees in influencing the environmental research being conducted by the agency.

In summary, the following oversight requests remain outstanding and require compliance on the part of the agency. Please produce the requested records no later than 5:00 PM on Friday, November 6th, 2026:

1. Please provide to the Committee the EPA’s Agency RIF and Reorganization Plans (ARRPs) transmitted to OMB and OPM pursuant to OMB Director Russ Vought’s February 2025 memo.
2. Please provide to the Committee the post-reorganization budget and staffing levels for each of the agency’s field laboratory and research facilities that remain open.
3. Please provide to the Committee all documents and communications (including, but not limited to, emails, text messages, instant messages, comments, notes, analyses, legal and other memoranda, letters, telephone logs, Signal messages, meeting minutes, calendar entries, PowerPoint slides, and presentation materials) exchanged between EPA and OMB regarding the repeal of the Endangerment Finding.
4. Please provide to the Committee all documents and communications (including, but not limited to, emails, text messages, instant messages, comments, notes, analyses, legal and other memoranda, letters, telephone logs, Signal messages, meeting minutes, calendar entries, PowerPoint slides, and presentation materials) exchanged between EPA and DOE regarding the repeal of the Endangerment Finding.
5. Please provide to the Committee all documents and communications (including, but not limited to, emails, text messages, instant messages, comments, notes, analyses, legal and other memoranda, letters, telephone logs, Signal messages, meeting minutes, calendar entries, PowerPoint slides, and presentation materials) exchanged between EPA and the Trump Vance 2025 Transition Team regarding the repeal of the Endangerment Finding.
6. Please provide to the Committee all documents and communications (including, but not limited to, emails, text messages, instant messages, comments, notes, analyses, legal and other memoranda, letters, telephone logs, Signal messages, meeting minutes, calendar entries, PowerPoint slides, and presentation materials) exchanged between EPA and DOE regarding the report titled, “A Critical Review of Impacts of Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the U.S. Climate.”

²³ <https://science.house.gov/2026/6/environment-subcommittee-hearing-advancing-environmental-protection-through-science-and-technology>.

7. Please provide to the Committee all documents and communications (including, but not limited to, emails, text messages, instant messages, comments, notes, analyses, legal and other memoranda, letters, telephone logs, Signal messages, meeting minutes, calendar entries, PowerPoint slides, and presentation materials) within EPA regarding the agency's review of the scientific basis for the proposal to repeal the Endangerment Finding.
8. Please provide to the Committee a written update regarding the status of the IRIS assessment for PFNA, including whether any scientific work remains ongoing for the assessment and the date by which the agency intends to finalize and publish the assessment.
9. Please provide to the Committee a list of all research products that have been delayed, modified, or declined since January 20th, 2025, due to the agency's review or conclusions regarding the alignment of scientific research with administration priorities, including the topics of the research products.

EPA's non-responsiveness to Committee oversight during the 119th Congress has been unacceptable. The agency must respect congressional prerogatives. We remain determined to obtain the information we need to perform our duties on behalf of the American people. EPA should understand that a lack of cooperation will not frustrate the Committee's oversight permanently. It will merely strengthen our commitment to employing all the tools at our disposal to hold the agency accountable.

Pursuant to Rule X of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology "shall review and study on a continuing basis laws, programs, and Government activities relating to nonmilitary research and development."²⁴ The Committee possesses jurisdiction over environmental research and development.²⁵ If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Josh Schneider or Sara Palasits with the Committee's Minority staff at (202) 225-6375. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

²⁴ [119 First Session House Rules](#).

²⁵ *Id.*

CC: Chairman Brian Babin
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology