

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

April 7, 2021

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

We are conducting oversight of your decision to abruptly fire all Trump administration appointed members of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) and Science Advisory Board (SAB).¹ As such, we request documents and information about the decision to fire these officials, including the process used for this unprecedented decision.

According to media reports, the EPA "will purge more than 40 outside experts appointed under President Donald Trump" from both the CASAC and SAB panels in a decision the *Washington Post* describes as "unusual."² Members are appointed to three-year terms and generally complete the entire term.³ Traditionally science advisory boards are bipartisan panels used to provide advice to the Administrator. Unfortunately, it appears the Biden administration is continuing to purge officials in the government who do not share its political beliefs.⁴

In 2017 during the Trump administration, House Democrats raised concerns because nine members of one scientific advisory committee were not renewed for a second term, writing to the EPA Administrator that they were "seriously concerned that you now intend to fill these newly open positions with members who will serve as advocates for specific policies rather than as unbiased experts."⁵ In contrast, the Biden Administration has now fired more than 40 board

¹ Alex Guillén, *Regan fires Trump EPA scientific board members for 'reset'*, POLITICO Pro, Mar. 31, 2021, available at <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2021/03/regan-fires-trump-epa-scientific-board-members-for-reset-3987934>.

² Dino Grandoni, *EPA dismisses dozens of key science advisers picked under Trump*, Wash. Post, Mar. 31, 2021, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/03/31/epa-advisory-panels/>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ See letter from Ranking Member James Comer, Committee on Oversight and Reform, et. al., to Dana Remus, Counsel to the President, Feb. 2, 2021, available at <https://republicans-oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2-2-21-letter-to-WHCO.pdf>.

⁵ See letter from Frank Pallone, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. On Energy and Commerce, et. al., to Scott Pruitt, Administrator, U.S. EPA, Apr. 18, 2017, available at

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members appointed during the previous administration, not even allowing them to complete their terms. The midterm firing of science advisory board members within the first months of a new Administration demonstrates a deeply troubling partisan political agenda.

Your apparent decision to use a political litmus test to determine who should serve on EPA scientific advisory boards raises serious concerns about the politicization of the EPA. Ironically, an EPA spokesman stated that fired board members are “eligible and encouraged to reapply,” raising questions about why the agency would “encourage” board members to apply after being fired unless the rationale for their dismissal is not related to qualifications.⁶ Indeed, removing science advisory board members simply because they were appointed by a different political party seriously undermines the credibility of EPA and its advisory boards.

In order for Committee Republicans to better understand EPA’s reasoning for firing science advisory board members in what appears to be a political purge, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible but no later than April 21, 2021.

- (1) All documents and communications from January 20, 2021 to present, related to EPA’s decision to fire members on the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and the Science Advisory Board.
- (2) All documents and communications from January 20, 2021 to present, related to the “internal review” conducted by EPA’s Science Advisor and Scientific Integrity Official referenced in Administrator Regan’s email to staff on March 30, 2021.⁷
- (3) All documents and communications between EPA and any outside persons or organizations, from January 20, 2021 to present related to EPA’s decision to fire members on the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and the Science Advisory Board.
- (4) All documents and communications between EPA and the White House, from January 20, 2021 to present related to EPA’s decision to fire members on the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and the Science Advisory Board.

To ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to

https://energycommerce.house.gov/sites/democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/files/documents/EPA.%20Pruitt.2017.05.18.%20Letter%20re%20EPA%20Board%20of%20Scientific%20Counselors.OI_EE_.pdf

⁶ Dino Grandoni, *supra* note 2.

⁷ E-mail from Michael S. Regan, EPA Administrator, to All Staff, Mar. 30, 2021, available at <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/f/?id=00000178-60f0-d9ca-af78-7cf8dff00000>.

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investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Ralph Norman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment