

**Chairman Lisa Murkowski Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,  
and Related Agencies**

**Review of the FY2018 Budget Request for the Environmental Protection Agency**

**June 27, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Today, we will review the FY 2018 budget request for the Environmental Protection Agency. I'd like to welcome our witnesses this morning: Administrator Pruitt, who is accompanied by Holly Greaves, a Senior Advisor to the Administrator. Thank you for testifying before the Subcommittee. I look forward to having a productive dialogue.

As a reminder, we'll adhere to the "early bird rule" for recognizing members for questions. I will call on members in the order they arrive, going back and forth between the majority and the minority. We'll do six-minute rounds of questions. Because there is substantial interest in this hearing, I am asking members to adhere to the time limit as closely as possible. It is my hope that we will be able to do multiple rounds of questions with one caveat. In order to accommodate schedules and hold this hearing in June, I have promised Administrator Pruitt that we will finish by noon because he has a prior commitment that requires travel.

The EPA's FY 18 budget request totals approximately \$5.7 billion. The proposal is a stark change from the funding levels provided in the FY 17 omnibus and represents a substantially different vision for EPA than we saw in the previous Administration.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. For years, the Agency has overstepped its appropriate role. Rather than focusing on the core mission of cleaning up the environment, the Agency has produced rule after rule using questionable legal authority. Rather than being treated as partners, states were often treated as adversaries simply because they had a different plan to comply with environmental regulations.

I've expressed concern for years that the Agency's work on the Waters of the United States rule was very problematic for the State of Alaska because the rule would subject even the most routine projects to EPA scrutiny and delay. Those concerns were ignored as the Obama Administration plowed forward with a flawed rule that was stayed in the courts, and I commend you, Administrator Pruitt, on your plan to take a commonsense approach on this issue.

The Agency is currently taking a hard look at duplicative and unnecessary financial assurance requirements for hardrock mining that were advanced during the previous Administration.

Administrator Pruitt, you have signaled a desire to refocus the Agency on its core mission, and I support your efforts. You have signaled a desire to spend more time moving forward with measures that have tangible environmental benefits and less time writing rules that may or may not make a real on-the-ground difference. We should all be with you in taking this

commonsense approach. Ensuring that we have clean air and clean water is a serious mission and deserves support.

We can maintain responsible levels of spending at the EPA and continue our efforts to keep our air and water clean. Unnecessary regulations don't always result in a cleaner environment.

Since the Subcommittee has already reduced spending at the Agency, I don't believe we can achieve the level of budget cuts proposed in the FY 18 budget and effectively move forward with the back-to-basics approach that I support. And, some of the proposed reductions and eliminations in the budget are in direct contrast to that back-to-basics approach. The budget proposes eliminating the Alaska Native Villages program, which provides critical basic drinking water and sanitation infrastructure – better known as flushing toilets and running water – to Native Alaskans in remote villages.

The Targeted Airshed Grants program – which was also proposed for elimination by the Obama Administration – is helping clean up air pollution in places like Fairbanks with real, on-the-ground measures like changing out wood stoves that are less efficient. The radon program – which the Obama Administration also proposed to eliminate – helps fight the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking. We've rejected changes like these in the past, and I will push my colleagues to do so again this year.

I am pleased that the budget proposes current funding levels for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and continues funding for the WIFIA program because we need to find creative ways to meet our nation's water infrastructure challenges. Beyond infrastructure, I am committed to ensuring that the Agency has the resources it needs to process air, water, and pesticides permits and to implement the new TSCA law – which I know is a priority for both the Administrator and Ranking Member Udall.

As with every President's budget, the FY 18 request is a proposal and the Subcommittee now has the difficult job of crafting an appropriations bill that actually spends taxpayer dollars.

Before I close, I'd like to briefly mention my hope that the new Administration will work with me on a number of lower profile, but nonetheless important, issues that uniquely affect Alaskans. From fish grinding to PM 2.5 in Fairbanks to small, remote incinerators, I had a good working relationship with Administrator McCarthy, and we were able to move the ball forward. Unfortunately, in some cases we failed to get the ball across the finish line, and it is my hope that we will be able to work together to clean up the environment in a sensible manner.

I will be asking you about a number of these issues during my question time, so I will turn to Ranking Member Udall for any comments he would like to make.

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