

Chairman Capito Opening Statement at Hearing on Nomination of Lee Zeldin to Lead EPA

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.), Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, held a hearing on the Nomination of Lee Zeldin to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Below is the opening statement of Chairman Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) as delivered.

"I am excited to welcome all of you to the EPW Committee hearing, the first one of the 119th Congress and my first as the Chairman. This is also the first hearing with Senator Whitehouse as the Ranking Member.

"Like me, Ranking Member Whitehouse has served on the EPW Committee since he came to the Senate. He is a passionate and vocal advocate on behalf of Rhode Island, of his constituents, and he is a great partner here on this Committee in delivering legislative solutions for the American public.

"I am proud of our previous efforts that we've worked together to move bipartisan legislation forward, such as laws to support carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration technology, as well as the ADVANCE Act*, which we passed and worked together on for several years, finally got it over the finish line last year, and it was signed into law in working to modernize the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.*

"My partnership with Ranking Member Whitehouse on these issues reflects the broader tradition of the EPW Committee. Quite honestly, we have some tough issues sometimes in here where we have strong disagreement, but we always want to find common ground.

This Committee has a strong legacy of working together to pass bipartisan legislation to improve our nation's infrastructure, invest in water systems, and help clean up our environment.

"I look forward to continuing this strong bipartisan tradition as the Chairman of the Committee, working with the Ranking Member and all of our members to address critical issues within our jurisdiction of this Congress.

"This morning, we will hear from President Trump's nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency, former Congressman Lee Zeldin. Welcome.

"Congressman Zeldin has served our nation honorably in the U.S. Army, first on active duty and then in the Army Reserve. In 2014, Congressman Zeldin was elected to the House of Representatives – where he served the state of New York for eight years.

"Throughout his tenure in the House of Representatives, Congressman Zeldin championed critical environmental policies that helped his Long Island district. He supported legislation to boost innovation for clean energy technologies and policies that strengthened our nation's energy security.

"I enjoyed meeting with Congressman Zeldin to hear about his experience and his vision for how he would prioritize the Agency's work as the EPA Administrator.

"I believe the EPA must return to its core missions.

"The EPA also should better manage taxpayers' dollars by doing more with the vast funding that Congress provides. That means reducing, of course, bureaucratic red tape so the state agencies responsible for protecting our nation's air, land, and water can do so without Washington, D.C. getting into the way.

"Doing so will lead to those state agencies efficiently improving our drinking water systems and issuing relevant air, land, and water permits. It also means prioritizing the EPA's attention towards issues that will help Americans in their daily lives.

"When the EPA focuses on what it does best, it doesn't just benefit the environment, it benefits our economic growth.

"For example, the Agency should prioritize cleaning up brownfields and Superfund sites to facilitate new economic development of those locations, many of which are located in rural and distressed areas.

"I look forward to hearing Congressman Zeldin's plans to build on the work initiated by the first Trump Administration, including the EPA, which took the first step to address legacy PFAS contamination.

"And, as the Agency fulfills its obligations under our nation's bedrock environmental laws, the Administrator should also take into account affordability and electric reliability.

"Recently, the organization responsible for ensuring grid reliability found that more than half of the United States could experience rolling blackouts in the next decade because of the lack of reliable power capacity. Areas at risk of shortages include New England, the Mid-Atlantic, California, the Midwest, and the Great Plains.

"The reliability risk is due to the projected retirement of dispatchable power plants, compiled with a 15 percent increase in electricity demand over the next decade. Critically, this demand cannot be met solely with intermittent energy generation.

"Spiking energy costs and rolling blackouts are an unacceptable fact if the U.S. is to continue as a global leader.

"Actions that policymakers, and regulators, take now will determine whether America will thrive in an era with a cleaner environment, energy abundance, lower

costs, and economic prosperity or face it with a path of scarcity, inflation, and stagnation.

"I support that first option I named, and believe our nominee does as well.

"I have confidence that the EPA, under Congressman Zeldin's leadership, will focus on the EPA's core mission to protect human health and the environment, while acknowledging the critical role the Agency plays in our economy and international leadership.

"In doing so, the EPA can make great progress in addressing key environmental challenges consistent with the authorities the Congress has given the Agency. I look forward to discussing these issues with Congressman Zeldin today.

"I now recognize our Ranking Member Whitehouse for his opening statement."

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