



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OCT 13 2015

OFFICE OF
CONGRESSIONAL AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your October 8, 2015, letter regarding an upcoming hearing that the Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety is planning on holding jointly with the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy on the topic of international climate negotiations. The Administrator asked that I respond to your letter.

It is my understanding that the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee has confirmed Todd Stern from the U.S. Department of State as a witness for this hearing. Mr. Stern, as the Special Envoy for Climate Change, is in the best position to describe the Administration's efforts with regard to the international climate negotiations. As the Administrator described in your recent phone call, and as reiterated in e-mails and phone conversations with your staff, the agency cannot speak to the full suite of domestic policies that are being considered in these negotiations and is not the party responsible for developing the total emissions reduction numbers for the U.S. It is my understanding that you are seeking a witness who can speak to the development of the emission reduction numbers, and given that neither the entirety of the domestic climate policies, nor the development of the total number are within the purview of the agency, I respectfully continue to assert that the agency does not have a witness who can speak to the issues that are the topic of this hearing.

As previously indicated, while some of the agency's actions are in fact significant parts of the domestic climate policies, they are not the entirety. The agency has worked with the Committee to provide information on each of the policies within our purview, including most recently having the Acting Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation testify before your Committee earlier this month at a hearing entitled "Economy Wide Implications of President Obama's Air Agenda" which included, among other Clean Air Act actions, a focus on the Clean Power Plan, a centerpiece of the agency's climate actions.

The agency takes seriously its obligations to testify before Congress as evidenced by the 33 hearings the agency has provided a witness for this year, including eight hearings before your Committee, three of which were with the Administrator as the witness. In fact, throughout the 114th Congress the agency has worked well with you and your staff to accommodate all the Committee requests for agency testimony. As such, the agency has provided a witness to your Committee each time one has been requested.

However, we feel strongly that it is not appropriate for the agency to testify on topics outside of our expertise and purview as is the case with this particular hearing.

Again, I want to reiterate that the agency holds the oversight functions of Congress in high regard and is pleased to work with the Committee on these and other matters; however, the agency is not the entity within the Administration who can speak to the topic of this particular hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura J. Vaught". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "L" and "V".

Laura Vaught
Associate Administrator

cc: The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Minority Member