

Opening Remarks of Ranking Member Whitehouse: *The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget.*

Good afternoon.

The point of science isn't to have an opinion, it's to make a prediction. Science is society's headlights, predicting what's ahead. What science has unequivocally shown for decades—EPA's recent efforts to dismantle and distort science notwithstanding—is that fossil fuel emissions are disrupting Earth's basic operating systems, in increasingly dangerous ways. As ocean and weather systems go haywire, all the fossil-fuel-funded faux science will count for naught—indeed, it will inevitably be exposed as fraud.

Climate change is moving from the science department to the economics department, so the first hits coming are economic, from industries that must predict how climate change will affect their businesses. One industry that has to predict well is the insurance industry, for fiduciary and business reasons.

Climate risk is melting down homeowners' insurance. Florida is first and worst. 64% of voters in Florida understand their home insurance crisis relates to climate change; even 44% of Trump voters understand this. Home insurance costs are exploding; insurers are leaving customers, in some cases they're leaving whole states and regions; and predictions are that the cascade goes from climate risk, to insurance collapse, to mortgage collapse, to property values collapsing, to full-on recession. Already Florida leads the nation in property value decline.

Every increased premium, every notice of non-renewal, every customer dumped into a state plan, ties back to the fossil fuel industry's twinned operations of climate denial fraud and dark money corruption, operating through dozens of front groups, which have blockaded efforts to reduce the underlying climate risk that's driving that whole cascade. Even though they knew, they deployed fraud and corruption to blockade.

Another cost going up for consumers is electricity bills. This is driven in part by the fossil fuel industry's plot to subvert the powers of government to keep inexpensive clean energy off the grid. Ask any grid operator: inexpensive clean energy runs first on the grid, because it's inexpensive. As demand climbs, the grid then goes to more and more expensive fossil fuel plants, which raise and raise the grid price, and consumer costs go up.

The point of the industry plan is to raise consumer costs by reducing clean energy, sending extra billions to fossil fuel plants and fossil fuel producers; it's a money pump, deliberately extracting money from consumers and sending it to Trump's big corrupt fossil fuel donors.

The Trump administration persistently lies about the added cost — that’s part of what the fossil fuel industry paid for. Administrator Zeldin himself has said, for example, that the wind and solar industries—quote—“would not exist without government subsidies.”

But that’s simply not true. Coal and gas are more expensive per MWh than wind and solar, even with the \$700+ billion “free-to-pollute” subsidy that fossil fuel gets from the U.S. government every year.

Grid operators don’t lie, they run grids, based on cost. You can see it. Or you can look at contracts. Offshore wind will cost 9 cents/kwh in our 18 cent/kwh average cost grid. Do the math. 9 is less than 18. And yet they lie.

Administrator Zeldin has played a huge part in delivering this payback to Trump’s fossil fuel donors. Payback in the form of policies driving dirtier air and water, worsening climate change and extreme weather, and driving higher costs for consumers in the form of ever higher property insurance premiums and electricity bills.

From attempting to kill clean energy programs to handing out pollute-for-free passes to fossil fuel power plants to saddling Americans with increasingly unaffordable gas guzzlers, Zeldin has executed the fossil fuel industry’s agenda.

A massive reckoning is coming. Those who sold out, for position and power, and presumably to be taken care of afterwards by polluters; those who lied to the public; those who chose to support the industry’s interest over the public interest; those who drove consumer costs up, on purpose, to reward big political Trump donors—they will be exposed.

It is inevitable. Indeed, it’s already begun. All the climate denial fraud you help propagate; all the corrupt dark money your polluter bosses sluice through this building; none of that will stand against nature’s reckoning—a reckoning is inevitable; that is as inevitable as sunrise.

“We ignore at our own peril the fact that these natural systems, in other words, nature’s own economy, provide the foundation for our prosperity and our national security.”