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

OFFICE OF
ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

April 18, 2018

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

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

Thank you for your April 13, 2018, letter regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and for the opportunity to provide clarity on Administrator Pruitt's email accounts. The Administrator asked me to respond on his behalf. My office creates all EPA email accounts, including those used by the Administrator, and is responsible for conducting the email searches in response to FOIA requests and Congressional inquiries.

Since Administrator Browner's tenure (1993-2001), the EPA has maintained secondary accounts for all Administrators. One account would follow the EPA's standard naming convention, such as pruitt.scott@epa.gov, and serve as the public's primary means of emailing the Administrator. The extremely high volume of correspondence received in the primary account – as many as 1.5 million emails annually – necessitates the use of secondary accounts for routine communications, for example, with senior staff and agency personnel. All Administrators since Administrator Browner have used secondary email accounts.

When Administrator Pruitt began his tenure at the EPA, staff created his primary email account (pruitt.scott@epa.gov) and a second account for scheduling purposes. Staff later created an account intended for the Administrator's day-to-day communications (esp7@epa.gov[1]), an account he never used. Staff then created the account he uses for day-to-day communications, sooners7@epa.gov. However, that must now be changed.

The agency stands by the commitment Administrator Pruitt made to you during his confirmation hearing regarding public access to his records. As long as EPA Administrators have had secondary email accounts, EPA staff have routinely searched requested accounts in

[1] The only emails sent from that account were three "test" emails my information technology staff sent to confirm functionality when the account was initially created.

response to FOIA and Congressional inquiries. That practice has not changed under Administrator Pruitt's leadership. However, in response to your concern, my office is conducting a full review of the searches conducted regarding FOIA requests seeking Administrator Pruitt's records. If additional responsive documents exist, we will contact the relevant requesters, and we will update you once our review is complete. Further, we are reviewing our processes and will make any appropriate improvements.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you or your staff have additional questions regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

STEVEN FINE Digitally signed by STEVEN FINE
Date: 2018.04.18 19:10:17
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Steve Fine
Deputy Chief Information Officer