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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6175

August 24, 2017

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

I write to request information about the manner in which the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing grant solicitations. A recent report[1] states that you have assigned a political appointee in EPA's Office of Public Affairs to sign off on the agency's issuance of grant solicitation decisions. According to the report, EPA's spokesperson said, in response to press inquiries, that "grants are being reviewed to ensure they adhere to the Trump administration's goals and policies and the EPA's back-to-basics agenda."

EPA awards hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of competitive grants each year, including for environmental research and development and the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act. According to former EPA officials interviewed for the press report, it is highly unusual for the Office of Public Affairs or a political appointee to sign off on grant solicitations before they are made public. Such action raises concerns that EPA may be planning to politicize the types of grants EPA awards or the recipients thereof.

A review of the EPA grant database[2] indicates that grants awards to several states have declined in early 2017. For example, grants to Massachusetts declined from almost $20 million from February 1-July 31, 2016 to just over $4.5 million during the same period in 2017. Delaware received almost $14 million during this 6-month period in 2016, but has received about $7.5 million in the comparable interval in 2017. California received more than $72 million in grants in 2016 and almost $39 million in the analogous 2017 timeframe. There could be many reasons for these apparent declines, including uncertainties about EPA's budget, the past provision of one-time large grants, the possibility that some grant program disbursements have been delayed for all states in 2017, or the possibility that fewer applications for competitive grants were received from these states. However, in light of the potential that EPA's decision to involve political appointees represents a change in the grant-solicitation process and may be indicative of the politicization of the grant-awarding process, I request your prompt responses to the following requests for information:

1. Please provide a list of all EPA grant programs that will be subject to this new solicitation process.

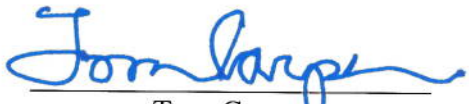
[1] https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2017/08/17/stories/1060058907
[2] https://www.usaspending.gov/DownloadCenter/Pages/DataDownload.aspx

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2. For each such grant program, please describe the deviations from the past process used to solicit grant applications.
3. For each such grant program, please indicate whether political appointees will also be signing off on the recipient of each grant after award recommendations are made by EPA career staff.
4. For your tenure at EPA to date, and quarterly thereafter, please provide a list of grants that were recommended for award by EPA career staff that were subsequently declined, and a list of grants that were recommended for decline by EPA career staff that were subsequently awarded. For each such grant, please provide the name and location of the applicant, the grant program for which the application was submitted, and the reason for over-ruling EPA career staff's recommendations.

Thank you very much for your attention to this important matter. Please provide your response no later than September 22, 2017. If you or members of your staff have further questions, please feel free to ask them to contact Ms. Michal Freedhoff at the Committee on Environment and Public Works at (202) 224-8832.

Sincerely yours,



Tom Carper
Ranking Member