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U.S. Senate Date: Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

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BUSINESS MEETING

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:48 a.m. in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Shelley Moore Capito [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Whitehouse, Cramer, Curtis, Graham, Sullivan, Ricketts, Wicker, Boozman, Husted, Merkley, Kelly, Padilla, Alsobrooks.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Senator Capito. Good morning, everyone. We have the presence of a quorum, and so I now call this business meeting to order.

For the information of the members of the committee, Ranking Member Whitehouse and I will deliver our opening statements, and once we have sufficient attendance, we will vote on the pending nominee. After the roll call vote, members who wish to be recognized to speak on the nomination may do so.

So I want to thank my colleagues for attending today's business meeting. Today we are considering the nomination of Jeffrey Hall to lead the EPA Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, or OECA. Mr. Hall has experience as a litigator, prosecutor and legal advisor to the Department of Justice and in private practice, providing him with a broad understanding of the enforcement needs and challenges facing the government.

OECA is charged with enforcing the most serious water, air, and chemical pollution violations under the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, CERCLA and the Toxic Substances Control Act. The office also must work with EPA regional offices, in partnership with State governments, tribal governments, and other Federal agencies to promote regulatory compliance and enforce the

Nation's environmental laws and regulations.

The previous administration placed an outsized emphasis on penalizing regulated entities rather than working with them to ensure compliance. OECA needs to strike a balance between encouraging and achieving regulated entities' compliance with our environmental laws and prioritizing criminal or civil penalty enforcement where it will address serious violations of law to best protect our environmental resources.

Mr. Hall's understanding of both sides of the enforcement and compliance question, as demonstrated by his experience and testimony before the committee, make him well qualified to lead OECA.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination and I will now turn to Ranking Member Whitehouse for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Senator Capito follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

You will not be surprised that I take a very different view. Jeffrey Hall, Trump's nominee for Assistant Administrator of EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance is yet another industry crony more interested in serving big polluters than in serving the public.

Mr. Hall's experience in environmental law is limited to a few months at DOJ's Environment and Natural Resource Division, and two years at a Trump-aligned firm working to undercut the Clean Air Act. So why hire him? From mid-February 2025 when he entered the building to mid-March, Mr. Hall's greatest hits included dismissing a Clean Air Act lawsuit days before trial against a Cancer Alley chemical plant located next to an elementary school, a directive to scale back enforcement that might "unduly burden" fossil fuel, including all enforcement against methane pollution, including the big methane leakers who are so bad they don't even meet their own industry leak standards, and adding political reviews to energy-related, i.e., fossil fuel related matters.

In June, EPA dismissed an administrative complaint, with prejudice so they cannot bring it again, against Trump mega donor and former Pam Bondi employer, GEO Group. The complaint

alleged mis-use of pesticides at a detention facility where a separate lawsuit alleges prison guards sprayed the chemicals directly on inmates. When asked at his confirmation about this abrupt dismissal, Hall, who oversaw the office, claimed no involvement and insisted career personnel made the decision. Then, admitted in his QFRs that he was briefed on the matter in May and knew of likely additional violations.

Trump issued an executive order discouraging all criminal regulatory enforcement, a free pass for, say, falsifying pollution data or engaging in dangerous behavior that causes death, as in the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill.

On the civil side, DOJ has filed fewer enforcement complaints in the first six months of an administration on EPA's behalf than in any previous administration. Helping polluters more, EPA's enforcement attorneys were offered a targeted buyout in August, a move Hall did not contest because a smaller staff can deliver what he calls appropriate enforcement. Appropriate for polluters, I would say.

Republicans stalled President Biden's OECA nominee for two years and now rush to install someone who sees his job to "advance American energy dominance." That is Trump-speak for fossil fuel polluters.

Once upon a time, Republicans used to be against amnesty, for law and order, and against government picking winners and

losers. Now polluters are getting their agents on the inside to dismantle proper enforcement. I am not going to be a part of this. I will vote no on Mr. Hall and urge my colleagues to do the same.

[The prepared statement of Senator Whitehouse follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Does anybody wish to talk on the nominee while we are waiting to fill out the dais here?

We will hold for just a minute then.

[Pause.]

Senator Capito. All right, if I could have everybody's attention. I think 25 minutes is pretty long.

So what I am going to do is recess the business meeting so that we can hopefully meet off the Floor during the 11:00 o'clock votes. We will inform your staff as to when and where. And I would ask the witnesses to go ahead and move forward for the second portion.

My apologies to all of us who are in the room. I appreciate it.

[Whereupon, at 10:16 a.m., the committee proceeded to other business.]