Oral Testimony of John W. Busterud
Before The United States Senate
Committee on Environment and Public Works
May 14, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and all the distinguished members of this Committee. It has been a privilege to meet with you and your staff to learn about the issues of highest concern to you. I intend to work with all of you to ensure that we protect human health and the environment for all Americans.

I humbly appear before you nominated to serve as EPA's Assistant Administrator for the Office of Land and Emergency Management. I'm grateful to President Trump and Administrator Zeldin for giving me the opportunity to lead the men and women of OLEM. If confirmed, I look forward to working with our dedicated career staff, states, communities, and stakeholders to ensure OLEM fulfills its core statutory mission to clean up historic sites, prevent releases, and respond with urgency and compassion when emergencies arise. In this way, OLEM provides an essential connection between environmental protection and economic prosperity, a linchpin of this Administration.

This morning, I'm accompanied by my wife Gretchen, herself a retired EPA attorney and a great source of inspiration and support. Our grown children Becky and Tommy are here in spirit.

I come to you with a background of commitment to public service and environmental protection.

Growing up in northern California, I was profoundly influenced by my father - also John Busterud – who served in the California Legislature and later as Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality under President Ford. Environmental issues were often front and center at the dinner table and took precedence over partisan politics – at least as far as I can remember!

After law school I chose to practice environmental law, representing businesses who saw environmental compliance and leadership as essential business functions, valuable to their customers, employees, and shareholders. In that role, I worked with state and federal regulatory agencies, advocacy organizations, communities, and our state legislature to support policies that sought to balance environmental protection with a sustainable business climate in California.

After retiring from corporate practice, I served on the board of the California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance, a public policy organization with members from Fortune 500 companies and labor unions. CCEEB works to find common sense, bi-partisan solutions to emerging environmental issues.

I was also privileged to serve our country as an officer in the Army Reserve, deploying to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Djibouti in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and retiring as a Colonel in 2014. In Baghdad, I had the unique opportunity to advise the Iraqi Minister of Environment as she developed Iraq's first environmental regulatory programs. This service not only provided some of the most fulfilling experiences of my life, but taught me that the rule of law is central to peace, prosperity, and environmental protection.

In the first Trump Administration, I was honored to serve as Regional Administrator of EPA Region 9. As RA, I worked with 600 dedicated career staff and Administrator Wheeler to protect human health and the environment for 50 million Americans in California, Nevada, Arizona, Hawaii, 148 tribes and the Pacific Territorial Islands. My experience in Region 9 was one of the highlights of my career and I'm looking forward to working again with all our Regions to support the offices that are truly the face of EPA across our nation.

If confirmed, I will be responsible for implementing some of the most forward-facing programs in EPA. As much as any other Office at the agency, OLEM affects "Main Street America" in many tangible and beneficial ways.

The Superfund program, both at civilian and federal facilities, remediates sites to provide essential protections for land and groundwater. The popular Brownfields program literally addresses environmental conditions on “Main Streets” across our country restoring urban lands to productive use. RCRA and underground tank programs ensure that we do not create future Superfund sites by preventing releases of hazardous materials from currently operating facilities. The Office of Mountains, Deserts, and Plains uses a cross-media, cross-agency approach to address abandoned hard rock mines. And finally, the Office of Emergency Management works alongside other federal agencies, states, cities and communities to plan for and respond to emergencies.

Through these programs, OLEM has the opportunity to provide essential human health and environmental protections for all Americans and do so in a non-partisan, common sense manner that promotes our Great American Comeback. I look forward to working with all of you to fulfill this mission.

Thank you, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and all the members of this Committee. I look forward to answering your questions.