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Chairman Capito Opening Statement at Hearing on EPA's Proposed FY26 Budget with Administrator Zeldin

Below is the opening statement of Chairman Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) as delivered.

"Welcome to Administrator Zeldin, it is good to see you again. I understand you've had several hearings over the past few days, so I know you've been busy. I believe you are doing an excellent job in implementing your vision to return the EPA to its core mission of protecting our country's air, our land, and water, while eliminating wasteful spending.

"To start, I applaud your aggressive efforts to undo the previous administration's regulatory overreach. Your leadership will put us on the path to energy dominance with sound environmental procedures.

"Your efforts, like rescinding the Biden Clean Power Plan 2.0 rule…that was part of a comprehensive strategy intended to shut down all fossil-fuel electric generation, will unleash our economy and help onshore American jobs.

"President Trump and his team are also putting West Virginia first, by announcing an agency-wide PFAS strategy and providing West Virginia with the authority to permit wells to sequester carbon dioxide. I appreciate the structural changes that you, Administrator Zeldin, are bringing to the EPA.

"Several weeks ago, the EPA announced that it would move more than 130 experts to assist with reviews of new chemicals and pesticides. In 2016, the Congress told the EPA to accelerate the new chemical approval process, but the Agency has done little to comply with that direction. Reviews currently take months, if not years, stifling innovation and leaving companies reliant on outdated chemicals.

"Addressing the pace of this process is crucial to maintaining our competitiveness in a global market, expanding our key industries, and onshoring critical supply chains. I appreciate that you, Administrator Zeldin, are taking into account my previous calls to provide more resources to address this issue.

"This leads us to why we are here today, the EPA's budget. I first want to thank the Administrator for acting on his pledge to prioritize being a good steward of tax-payer dollars.

"EPA has restored accountability to grant programs enacted through the partisan Inflation Reduction Act. For example, in February, the EPA canceled a $50 million grant made to the Climate Justice Alliance under the IRA's environmental justice grant program.

"The Climate Justice Alliance is a non-profit organization that I investigated and found explicitly engaged in pro-Hamas, anti-Israel, anti-Semitic, anti-police, and anti-military activities. Some of these activities occurred while they were under consideration for an EPA grant awarded by the last administration.

"The EPA has taken immediate action to investigate and reclaim the $20 billion dollars awarded under the so-called 'Green Bank' program in the IRA. This money was rushed out the door before the end of the last administration under unprecedented, and I would say, suspicious terms.

"The EPA's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget shows deep reductions for the agency. Some of these cuts reflect the best interests of hardworking Americans.

"For example, the budget proposes to cut $100 million from environmental justice programs that were added under the Biden Administration and have unnecessarily imposed requirements that are burdensome for small, regulated entities or grant awardees. This is a welcome start and it will reduce regulatory compliance burdens and allow tax dollars to beneficially impact more entities.

"However, there are bipartisan programs that would be impacted if the proposed budget is enacted, programs that have done much to help continuously clean up the air, water, and lands, as well as provide safe drinking water.

"For example, the proposed budget would reduce funding for the Brownfields program and includes an 89% cut to the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds.

"I and many of my colleagues have long been vocal about the importance of federal assistance for water infrastructure through the State Revolving Funds. In 2021, Congress made the largest bipartisan investment in the State Revolving Funds and water infrastructure in our nation's history, delivering more than $50 billion for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater programs.

"State revolving funds have helped many West Virginians, and many around the country, get connected with the water access and resources that they need. I hope that we can work together through the Appropriations process, as well as through the committee's reauthorizations efforts, to make sure that adequate resources remain available to support our water systems.

"I look forward to building to that future with you, Mr. Administrator, over the next several years."

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