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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

February 11, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
 Administrator
 Environmental Protection Agency

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

Over the past four years, I conducted oversight of the Biden-Harris Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to keep an eye on unprecedented spending. In that time, the EPA obstructed my oversight, ignored my letters, and refused to provide records showing what it was up to. One of my investigations exposed wasteful spending and EPA's failure to appropriately oversee the use of taxpayer dollars.¹ Specifically, my investigation into the EPA's 2021 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Cooperative Agreement Program found that the EPA did not collect financial documents from grantees showing how millions of taxpayer dollars were actually spent. For example, the EPA told my office that the SF-425 "is the only document detailing financial progress that grantees are required to submit to the Agency" during the lifecycle of the grant.² But, that document doesn't show what the money was spent on. Therefore, there's a lack of EPA oversight with respect to whether the taxpayer money under the grant was spent in furtherance of the grant's purpose. The EPA's wasteful and haphazard spending must come to an end. It's high time for common-sense oversight, accountability, and transparency by the EPA.

You and I met in my office on January 9, 2025, prior to your confirmation hearing. I was encouraged by your commitment to promote transparency. You even shared with me that the Biden-Harris EPA's spending problem was evidenced by an EPA official's recent description that the agency had been "throwing gold bars off the Titanic," in preparation of the Trump administration taking control.³ Under your leadership, the EPA must investigate this wasteful spending spree and conduct appropriate oversight. This includes taking measures to recoup any improper payments to grantees who have failed to comply with their grant agreements.⁴

¹ See Interim Report, Senator Charles E. Grassley, Ranking Member, Senate Budget Committee, 118th Congress, *Preliminary Oversight Findings of the EPA's 2021 Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program* (Feb. 22, 2024) (Showing the EPA obstructed my investigation into grantees' use of taxpayer dollars. Further, my report exposed the lion's share of grant money was used to pay for overhead at left-leaning NGOs and some grantees spent the money on climate-change rap songs, vacation time, and empathetic listening sessions.).

² Email on file with Comm. staff.

³ This statement was also published online by an investigative journalist. *EPA Advisor Admits 'Insurance Policy' Against Trump is Funneling Billions to Climate Organizations, 'We're Throwing Gold Bars off the Titanic'*, PROJECT VERITAS (Dec. 3, 2024), <https://www.projectveritas.com/news/epa-advisor-admits-insurance-policy-against-trump-is-gold-bars-off-titanic>.

⁴ See 2 C.F.R. 200.339 (providing federal agencies with the authority to pursue all "legally available remedies" for noncompliance with their grant conditions); 2 U.S.C. § 683 (showing the President has the authority to rescind

So Congress may conduct independent oversight, please provide answers to the following questions no later than February 25, 2025:

1. Will you require all recipients of taxpayer dollars through EPA funding programs to include financial documents showing exactly what taxpayer dollars were spent on?⁵ If so, starting when? If not, why not?
2. Will you create an oversight plan to discover and expose all wasteful spending by the EPA under the Biden-Harris administration and protect against wasteful spending in this administration? If so, please provide this plan to me and provide rolling updates of your findings.
3. Will you develop a plan to recoup all improper payments to recipients not in compliance with the terms of their grant agreement? If so, please provide this plan to me and provide rolling updates of the money the Trump EPA has recouped.

Thank you for your prompt review and responses. If you have any questions, please contact Jace Pimentel on my Committee staff at (202) 224-7708.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

budget authority upon determining that it will not be necessary to “carry out the full objectives or scope of programs for which it is provided,” or for “fiscal policy or other reasons”); 2 U.S.C. § 684 (showing the President and other agency and department heads have the authority to defer budget authority when permitted by law or “to achieve savings made possible by or through changes in requirements or greater efficiency of operations”).

⁵ This includes EPA grants, fellowships, research programs, contracts, and cooperative agreements.