

Trump transforms Environmental Protection Agency into direct instrument of big business

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Changes in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), run under the direct control of the president since it was established by Richard Nixon in 1970, will transform the mission of the agency from protecting human health from environmental toxins to directly serving the profit interests of corporate polluters. Field workers and scientists are being terminated by the Trump administration, and the leadership of EPA divisions is being replaced by corporate flunkies.

Earlier this month, President Trump declared that during the federal government shutdown, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Russell Vought would decide “which of the many Democrat Agencies, most of which are a political SCAM, he recommends to be cut, and whether or not those cuts will be temporary or permanent.” Trump added, “I can’t believe the Radical Left Democrats gave me this unprecedented opportunity.”

In July, the EPA’s Office of Research and Development (ORD) was closed and replaced by the Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions (OASES), which has been systematically staffed with Trump-aligned administrators after previous officials were forced out.

In an October 21 article, environmental reporter Hiroko Tabuchi of the *New York Times* summarized articles she has written exposing the restaffing of the EPA with former industry lobbyists whose careers were made fighting the agency’s anti-pollution measures:

- David Fotouhi has been installed as EPA deputy administrator under Administrator Lee Zeldin, himself a former Army intelligence officer and Republican congressman. Fotouhi is a lawyer who has fought the banning of asbestos on behalf of corporate interests.

- Alex Dominguez, the new deputy assistant administrator, is a former petroleum industry lobbyist.

- Aaron Szabo, who heads the Office of Air and Radiation, was a lobbyist for the American Chemistry Council, the chemical industry trade association.

- Nancy Beck, who is overseeing the approval of new chemicals for the EPA, was an executive of the American Chemistry Council.

- Lynn Dekleva, formerly a director of the same industry organization, who lobbied against the regulation of formaldehyde, is now leading the EPA chemical safety office.

- Steven Cook was an attorney for the chemical industry and is now working to repeal cleanup rules for PFAs, known as “forever chemicals.”

- Kyle Kunkler has been placed in charge of pesticides policy. Previously he represented the soybean industry, promoting the unrestricted use of the weed killer dicamba. The latter is a controversial chemical sold by Monsanto, BASF and DuPont that is tailored to boost genetically modified soybean plants but can damage neighboring crops when it drifts into the air. Within weeks of Kunkler’s appointment, the EPA recommended a rollback of restrictions on dicamba.

In late June, hundreds of EPA scientists submitted an open letter of protest titled a “Declaration of Dissent.” Addressed to Zeldin, the letter centered on “Five Primary Concerns” over policies that “recklessly undermine the EPA mission:”

1. Undermining public trust
2. Ignoring scientific consensus to benefit polluters
3. Reversing EPA’s progress in America’s most vulnerable communities
4. Dismantling the Office of Research and Development
5. Promoting a culture of fear, forcing staff to choose between their livelihood and the population’s well-

being.

The letter of protest cited Trump's OMB director, Russell Vought, the co-author of Project 2025, which declared that EPA employees should be in a constant state of terror. It stated:

When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains. We want their funding to be shut down so that the EPA can't do all of the rules against our energy industry... We want to put them in trauma.

The response of Trump to the protest was to retaliate. An investigation was carried out to identify the signatories, including those who signed the letter anonymously. Some 140 employees, including drinking water field workers, were subsequently placed on administrative leave.

The signatories are to be permanently fired. The Trump administration announced a "zero-tolerance policy for career bureaucrats unlawfully undermining, sabotaging and undercutting the administration's agenda."

The attacks on the EPA express the drive of the capitalist establishment to destroy any and all measures that stand in the way of its pursuit of corporate profit.

In a statement distributed to the "Stand Up for Science" demonstrations held in March of this year, titled "The defense of science requires a fight for socialism!", the Socialist Equality Party wrote:

Modern science and technology have made it possible to wipe out hunger and disease, vanquish ignorance and mysticism, and provide a high standard of living for every human being on the planet. Moreover, the revolutionary developments in transportation and communications, most recently through the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution, have shattered the barriers to human interaction and made possible the education and integration of all humanity on a scale never before seen in history.

The fight for science and human progress can only take place through the building of a socialist movement in the working class. Scientists are experiencing the same process of proletarianization now affecting doctors, teachers and other professionals. Scientists must recognize their common interests with all workers facing attacks on their living standards, jobs and democratic rights. No matter your education level or salary, to the oligarchy that rules America, you are as expendable as any other worker.



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