

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 5, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Administrator Zeldin:

I am gravely concerned regarding reports that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has warned more than 1,000 Agency employees that they could be fired at any time.¹ These employees work on critical programs including cleaning up hazardous waste sites and disaster debris, enforcing environmental laws that protect our air and water, and addressing the climate change impacts on our most vulnerable communities. Any efforts by the EPA to purge these employees undermines the Agency's mission to protect human health and the environment, putting communities and individuals across the country at great risk.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a memo on January 20, 2025, requiring agencies to identify and share with OPM a list of employees on probationary periods and "promptly determine whether those employees should be retained at the agency."² According to the New York Times, EPA employees were the first to receive notice they may be immediately fired without cause. It is deeply alarming this memo does not direct agencies to consider the performance of employees in their probationary period, raising concerns this Administration is simply targeting employees without consideration of their vital roles or functions in an effort to sabotage EPA's ability to execute its critical mission.

During President Trump's first term, he proposed steep budget cuts at EPA that included "Workforce Reshaping" to reduce the number of staff. Congress ultimately rejected the request on a bipartisan basis. That is because your Agency provides essential services to states and communities across the country, from ensuring safe drinking water to cleaning up toxic sites in support of economic development. This work cannot happen without staff – the majority of whom are based in regional offices and in the field, actually working to improve conditions on

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/03/climate/trump-epa-workers-zeldin.html>

² <https://www.chcoc.gov/content/guidance-probationary-periods-administrative-leave-and-details>

the ground. If you cut staff as drastically as these reports suggest, you will be failing the EPA's obligations to protect human health and the environment.

I urge you to reject any effort to reduce EPA's workforce in this severe and indiscriminate way.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations