

January 26, 2017

Dear Senators,

As you review EPA Administrator nominee Scott Pruitt's written answers to numerous questions for the record and consider whether or not to support his confirmation, you should be aware that over the past several days, the Trump administration has attempted to undermine science at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Specifically, the news media reported the administration ordered:

- Removal of Web content on climate change
- Vetting of scientific work by political staff before public release
- A freeze on many grants and contracts

These actions are very concerning, and if Mr. Pruitt supports them, that should disqualify him as administrator. Each of these actions directly undermines the EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment.

Orwellian demands to shut down informational websites and prevent the release of scientific findings don't change the reality of climate change: seas will keep rising, more communities will be flooded more often, storms will be stronger, and wildfires will be more likely and more damaging when coupled with higher temperatures and more frequent droughts.

While it appears that exposure by the news media has prompted the administration to at least temporarily rescind its order to remove Web content on climate change, there is no guarantee that new orders will not emerge unless we have pledges from Mr. Pruitt to safeguard public access to scientific information about climate change and other issues. Indeed, several climate change-related Web pages and reports have been removed from the State Department website.

Public servants should be free to state simple scientific facts. Americans have the right to see and benefit from taxpayer-funded research, and scientists have the right to share their findings openly and honestly, without political pressure, manipulation, or suppression. Political staff should never be in charge of deciding what scientific conclusions the public is allowed to see.

Freezing grants and contracts would almost certainly increase health risks for children and other vulnerable people in our country. American taxpayers would not receive the science-based information we all invest in to protect public health and our environment. This freeze means, for example, that the community grant program for safe drinking water may be delayed, increasing health risks in those communities that need help the most. It also means that the EPA's AirData website, which provides access to air quality data collected from

outdoor air monitors around the nation, is no longer collecting and posting data, jeopardizing the health of children, the elderly, and people with respiratory illness. Parents, families, communities, and research institutions that rely on this information to make health-related decisions (everything from letting children play outside on a bad air day to developing municipal plans to improve air quality) would be in the dark. And it means student interns and young researchers may lose opportunities in the STEM education fields that are so critically important. These are just a few of the consequences of this reckless decision.

Without research and monitoring, it becomes harder for states and communities to hold polluters accountable, and unfairly penalizes the majority of businesses that play by the rules and care about the health of their communities.

The Senate needs a clear answer about whether Attorney General Pruitt was aware of these actions and approved of them—and whether he'll actually enforce the EPA's scientific integrity policy. To ensure that Mr. Pruitt is intent on upholding and advancing the mission of the EPA to protect Americans' health, he must commit to preserving and honestly presenting scientific information and defending the right of government scientists to do their work unimpeded. If he is unwilling to do so, that is all the more reason to vote no on his nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimmell', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Kenneth Kimmell
President
Union of Concerned Scientists