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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

In 2025, AFGE Council 238 confronted: (1) the loss of our right to collectively bargain and of the recognition of our union in the workplace; (2) the unlawful firings of probationary employees; (3) retaliation against agency employees for asserting free speech rights; (4) the shuttering of our Environmental Justice and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs; (5) mass layoffs, also known as Reductions in Force (RIFs); (6) the dismantling of the Agency's science arm (the Office of Research and Development); (7) a wide-ranging reorganization; (8) the rescinding of remote work and telework; (9) staffing shortages due to the deferred resignation program; and, (10) the loss of our ability to effectively protect the environment, among other things.

The Trump Administration has brought historic disruption and upheaval to the Environmental Protection Agency's workforce. Each of these changes have triggered cascading impacts to the EPA'S ability to carry out the work required to protect human health and the environment. As we enter the new year, we look forward to working with our representatives in the House and Senate on the following:

I. REINSTATE EPA'S UNIONS NOW

- On March 27, 2025, President Trump issued an executive order (EO) to end collective bargaining and union recognition at agencies with national security missions, including EPA.
- EPA has a negligible national security portfolio.
- The EO has effectively ended union representation and collective bargaining at EPA for over 8,000 workers represented by AFGE and other unions, like NAIL and NAGE.
- AFGE upholds the Constitution and the laws of the United States in EPA's workplace and protects workers against arbitrary and illegal actions by management.
- Unions facilitate whistleblowing and preserve truth-telling in the workplace and are an important check on Agency wrongdoing.
- AFGE's collective bargaining agreement included requirements to uphold scientific integrity.
- EPA managers have been retaliating against EPA employees for filing EEO complaints or asserting their constitutional rights, with little available recourse for the employee.
- Morale at EPA is at an all-time low, with the Agency undergoing a persistent brain drain as technical workers leave EPA.
- The Protect America's Workforce Act (PAWA) will restore the right to collectively bargain at EPA. It has been passed by the House and should now be advanced by the Senate.

- Failing that, the right to organize by EPA workers should be restored by inserting a prohibition against using resources to enforce Trump’s union busting AO in any funding bill proposed for FY 2026.

ASK: Protect EPA workers right to organize by passing PAWA or including the restoration of union rights in any FY 2026 funding bill.

II. STOP ATTACKS ON EPA’S FUNDING AND STAFFING LEVELS

- In EPA’s 2026 appropriations bill, Congress should fully fund the Agency to FY 2024 levels, sending a powerful message that Americans want real guardians on the job protecting their health and safety.
- Adjusting for inflation, EPA’s budget has declined over 25% since the 1990s (from \$12 Billion to \$8.7 Billion.)
- The “Minibus” bill calls for a 4% cut to EPA’s FY25 budget.
- In 2025, EPA’s workforce dropped to Reagan Administration levels, from approx. 15,000 to just under 10,000 FTEs, even though funding for EPA technical staff remained steady.
- To recover staffing levels commensurate with appropriated funding, Congress should demand the end of the hiring freeze at the EPA.
- EPA spending, in real dollars, fell by half between 1980 and 2024.
- In the first Trump Administration, EPA did not hire additional staff even when Congress provided funds and directed that it do so.
- Cuts to EPA’s funding or mission directly threaten clean air, clean water, and the overall health of American families.
- According to a July 2025 Economist/YouGov poll, 66% of US adults believe that EPA should be expanded or remain the same rather than reduced.

ASK: Oppose Cuts to EPA Funding and Pass an Appropriations Bill that Fully Funds the EPA.

III. STOP SHUTDOWNS AND PAY FEDERAL WORKERS DURING A LAPSE IN FUNDING

- In October and November of 2025, EPA employees endured a 45 day shutdown, the longest in history.
- Most EPA employees went without pay for at least four weeks.
- Federal employees should not be made to go without pay during a shutdown.
- We support S. 3168, the bi-partisan Shutdown Fairness Act. It will guarantee pay for federal workers during any lapse in funding, whether they are working or not.

ASK: Stop Future Shutdowns and Support the Shutdown Fairness Act.

IV. STOP EPA ROLLBACKS AND DEREGULATION

- The Trump Administration is rolling back over thirty critical environmental regulations, resulting in damage to our health and catastrophic economic costs caused by climate

change events. The actions of this administration clearly go against the statutory obligations of the EPA, harming your constituents.

- Since Administrator Zeldin was appointed, EPA has proposed the weakening of protections from some of the most dangerous pollutants known to humankind— pollution and toxic chemicals that cause heart attacks, cancers, neurological and respiratory damage and disease, premature birth, and disruption of our hormone systems.
- In January 2026, EPA repealed the 2009 endangerment finding, abandoning any plans of regulating the emissions from greenhouse gases. The proposal defies numerous court rulings and goes against thousands of studies that demonstrate how climate change, fueled by climate pollution, is causing harmful impacts on people’s lives – including in the form of dangerous and deadly extreme weather.
- In June, 2025, EPA released its proposed rule to overturn the Carbon Pollution Standards. These standards protect people and the climate from carbon pollution produced by existing coal and new gas-fired power plants. Fossil fuel power plants are a top source of the carbon pollution driving climate change, and also have significant negative impacts on public health and air quality.
- In December 2025, EPA announced plans to eliminate tailpipe pollution standards, known as Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) rules, despite evidence that standards help keep fuel prices down, while removing them leads to higher long-term costs for consumers and harm public health.
- In a few short years, data centers—which run thousands of servers nonstop—have doubled the amount of energy they use. Harm is already being done, with communities near large data centers regularly exposed to dirty air and water that cause respiratory issues and other health problems. EPA has no plan to address the pollution from these centers.
- According to recent polling, 86% of Americans share the belief that “we need to hold corporate polluters accountable and keep them from pouring toxic chemicals into the air we breathe and the water we drink.”

ASK: Oppose These EPA Rollbacks and Deregulation and Save Lives, Costs and Hospital Visits.

V. STOP CUTS TO ORD AND EPA SCIENCE

- The Trump Administration has eliminated EPA’s Office of Research and Development (ORD), destroying the independent, objective and unparalleled research that informs EPA evidence-based decision-making. The elimination of EPA ORD means that the USA is no longer the preeminent authority in environmental health research.
- Losing ORD leaves the U.S. vulnerable to environmental disasters and emerging threats.
- 150 former ORD employees still have not been placed in other positions at EPA, and are languishing with their careers on hold.
- ORD is central to disaster response, it determined whether the air in East Palestine, OH was safe to breathe after the train derailment and provided smoke assessments for forecasting air quality within communities surrounding the Maui and LA wildfires.
- The Trump EPA has stripped language that correctly identifies the human influences among the primary causes of climate change from its website and eliminated information

about the risks climate change has to health, water, and infrastructure, among other impacts.

- EPA has stopped using the social cost of carbon dioxide and other climate pollutants in decision making and regulations. The social cost of carbon calculates the amount, in dollars, of damage caused by one ton of carbon pollution, so as to more accurately assess the costs or benefits of federal policies.

ASK: No cuts to ORD staffing, reconfigure EPA to restore ORD and stop attacks on EPA scientific decision-making.

VI. EJ WORKERS SHOULD BE REINTEGRATED INTO EPA'S WORKFORCE

- EPA dismantled the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights.
- EPA initiated the removal of 280 EPA EJ workers that protected communities most overburdened by pollution.
- Many EJ employees are still employed by EPA but are in limbo because the Agency has no clear plan on how to reintegrate them into the current workforce structure.
- EPA has so far refused to allow many EJ employees to transfer to other positions at EPA where they are sorely needed.

ASK: Push EPA to allow EJ employees to be reorganized into the Agency.