Federal Environmental Enforcement: Environmental Organizations Letter Requesting Congress Increased Funding for the United States Environmental Protection Agency

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Twenty-seven environmental organizations transmitted a July 12th letter to the Chair and Ranking Members of the relevant Senate and U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittees with jurisdiction over the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA").

The organizations executing the letter include:

Air Alliance Houston
Center for Biological Diversity
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Clean Air Council
Clean Water Action
Clean Wisconsin
Conservation Law Foundation
Earthjustice
Environment America
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Integrity Project
Environmental Law & Policy Center
League of Conservation Voters
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
National Environmental Law Center
National Parks & Conservation Association
National Resources Defense Council
Ohio Environmental Council
Patuxent Riverkeeper
Prairie Rivers Network
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
Suncoast Waterkeeper
Tampa Bay Waterkeeper
Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
Western Organization of Resource Councils

The organizations request funding for EPA's compliance monitoring and enforcement programs at levels that they indicate were proposed in the Biden Administration's budget for the 2023 fiscal year.

They argue in support of the request that adjusted for inflation:

. . . EPA enforcement expenditures fell 10% between 2020 and 2022, and have fallen 23.6% since 2012.

This is argued to have resulted in the loss of 20% of EPA's workforce. More than 600 scientists, engineers, attorneys, investigators, and support staff are stated to have been lost between 2012 and 2022.

The letter further argues that enforcement activity has "declined dramatically" in almost every category between the 2017 and 2021 fiscal years. It is further stated that in those four years:

. . . the number of inspections, criminal investigations, enforcement actions initiated or concluded, and criminal penalties fell at least 50% compared to the annual average between 2002 and 2016, while civil penalties declined 36%.

The organizations argue that the result of current enforcement leaves EPA less able to "protect communities of color and working-class neighborhoods already disproportionately harmed by pollution."

A copy of the letter can be downloaded here.