Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

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Washington, DC 20515

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October 4, 2017

The Honorable Arthur A. Elkins, Jr.
Inspector General
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Inspector General Elkins:

We write to request that you conduct an audit of the recent expenditures made by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for Administrator Pruitt's security that we believe constitute potential waste or abuse of taxpayer dollars. Similar to Administrator Pruitt's recent travels that precipitated your ongoing audit of EPA's travel policies,[1] recent news stories have detailed the expenditure of **more than $850,000** for Administrator Pruitt's security needs. These expenditures include Administrator Pruitt's hiring of an unprecedented, round-the-clock security detail for $832,735.40[2] and the construction of a soundproof security booth in the Administrator's personal office at a cost of $24,570.00.[3]

Individually, we are concerned that each of these expenditures is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Taken together, however, they are symptomatic of a troubling culture that appears to have swept through this administration since President Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2017. This culture, which is reflected in travel and lifestyle choices from the President on down, seems to embolden senior, politically appointed officials of the Trump administration to undertake lavish spending of taxpayer dollars for their sole and personal benefit, and not for the benefit of the Americans paying the tab.

A July 5, 2017 article by *Energy & Environment News* based on documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act found that EPA has spent $617,566.71 for Administrator Pruitt's security detail and $215,168.69 on travel costs for the detail. In total, the $832,735.40 spent on Administrator Pruitt's security detail during his first quarter as EPA Administrator is nearly **double**

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[1] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Inspector General, Audit of EPA's Adherence to Policies, Procedures and Oversight Controls Pertaining to the Administrator's Travel (August 28, 2017) (OA-FY17-0382).
[2] Bogardus, Kevin, "Big spike in security spending for Pruitt", Published July 5, 2017, https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060056958
[3] Brady, Dennis, "EPA spending almost $25,000 to install a secure phone booth for Scott Pruitt", Published September 26, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/09/26/epa-spending-almost-25000-to-install-a-secure-phone-booth-for-scott-pruitt/?utm_term=.f032d3bc85df

what the two previous Administrators spent on security over that same timeframe; yet, there is no apparent security threat against the Administrator to justify such a security detail or expenditures. According to an EPA budget document, Administrator Pruitt requested an additional 10 full-time equivalent employees to provide himself with round-the-clock security.[4]

In addition, a September 26, 2017 article in *The Washington Post*[5] found that EPA is spending $24,570 to construct a "secure, soundproof communications booth in the office of Administrator Scott Pruitt." A secure room such as this, typically called a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF), allows someone to communicate privately and without a breach in security. What makes this expenditure particularly appalling is that EPA currently possesses a SCIF within the EPA building where officials with the proper clearances can go to share classified information. Again, there has been no public justification for the construction of a duplicate secure communications facility within EPA, and certainly no justification for one for the EPA Administrator's sole-use within his personal office.

We have serious concerns that taxpayer funds are being misused in these instances. We are particularly troubled that these expenditures come at a time when President Trump proposes deep budget cuts for EPA, including an almost 25 percent reduction in the budget for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, the office that enforces the Nation's environmental laws.

To that end, we request that you conduct a review of Administrator Pruitt's security expenditures detailed in this letter to evaluate:

1) Are there any limits on the discretionary spending decisions of the Administrator to make purchases for his direct and personal benefit? What internal EPA policies, procedures, and oversight controls are in place to ensure that such funds are not misused or misappropriated?

2) Is the EPA Administrator legally justified in diverting agency staff (including personnel and FTEs salary) from EPA's Office of Enforcement personnel to the Administrator's private security detail? Were the alleged threats to the Administrator of sufficient urgency and degree to reasonably justify the size and scope of protection provided to the Administrator? Would the decision to transfer personnel from an already understaffed enforcement office have been required in the absence of the Trump administration's January 2017 hiring freeze on new Federal employees? Has EPA reviewed whether current threats justify continuing the current size and scope of the protection provided to the Administrator?

3) What was the justification for the Administrator to purchase a secure, soundproof communications booth to be located in the immediate Office of the Administrator, and does this justification warrant the expenditure of close to $25,000 for such technology when similar facilities are located in the EPA building? What internal protocols are in place to ensure that this new facility is not for the sole use and benefit of the Administrator?

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[4] *See* EPA FY 2018 President's Budget: Major Policy and Final Resource Decisions (https://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/04/04/document_cw_02.pdf).
[5] *See supra note 3.*

4) Did EPA comply with all agency policies, procedures, and oversight controls in procuring round-the-clock security for the Administrator and soliciting a contract for construction of Administrator Pruitt's secure, soundproof communications booth?

5) How can EPA strengthen its policies, procedures, and oversight controls to prevent excessive expenditures by the Office of the Administrator?

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact the staff at the Subcommittee on Water Resources at (202) 225-0060.

Sincerely,

PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member

GRACE NAPOLITANO
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water Resources & Environment

cc: The Honorable Scott Pruitt, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency