

Statement of Andrew R. Wheeler
Nominated to be Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Good morning. Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and members of the Committee, I am truly honored and humbled by this opportunity to appear today as the nominee for the position of Deputy Administrator at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. I want to thank President Trump for this distinguished opportunity. And I want to thank Administrator Pruitt for the trust he has showed in me in supporting my nomination.

As many of you know, I spent fourteen wonderful years working on this Committee for Chairman Inhofe and Senator Voinovich in a number of different roles including the Majority and Minority Staff Director and Chief Counsel. I must say the view from this table is far different than the view from the staff bench behind the dais.

Starting with the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments in 1996, through three highway bills, several WRDA bills, Brownfields, diesel reduction legislation and numerous others bills that I had the privilege to work on, I always tried to find common ground and work across the aisle.

I would like to take a moment and speak directly to the career employees of the EPA who may be watching this hearing. I started my career at EPA in the toxics office in 1991, as a career employee. I have always believed that the career employees at the EPA are some of the most dedicated and hard-working employees in the federal government, and if confirmed I would be honored to join you again. The mission of the EPA to protect human health and the environment is critical to our country and its citizens and something that I take very seriously and I know you do too.

President Trump and Administrator Pruitt have set an ambitious agenda that I intend to help implement if confirmed to this position. Administrator Pruitt has talked about returning EPA to its core mission and purpose, a goal that I whole-heartedly support. During his confirmation hearing Administrator Pruitt emphasized three key objectives:

First, we are a nation of laws and it is “EPA’s role to administer those laws faithfully.” I understand the separation of powers and through my time spent working here in the Senate, I know where the laws are drafted, many of them here in this room. I will work with the Administrator to ensure that the Agency is following the laws.

Second, Administrator Pruitt committed that the Agency would acknowledge, respect, and promote the critical role of the states in implementing the Federal environmental laws. Cooperative federalism is a cornerstone of the Administrator’s approach. We must work cooperatively with the States to ensure that the environment and public health are both protected.

Third, Administrator Pruitt emphasized the important role that the public plays in the regulatory process. He said it is critical that the EPA truly listen to the diverse views of the American people. That includes all of the people. It is vitally important that the American public understands the mutual goals of environmental protection and economic growth.

The environment today is cleaner than it has ever been in modern times. As a nation we have made tremendous progress since the 1970s and we must build upon that progress going forward.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I want to thank your staff for their service. I look forward to starting our dialogue now by answering any questions you may have.