

EPN “All Hands” Call, Friday, May 17, 2019

State perspective on the EPA-State partnership relationship in protecting public health and the environment.

Presenters

Martha Rudolph, former Director of Environmental Programs in the Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment and former President of the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS).

Bill Becker, former Executive Director of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA), which includes state air offices as well as local air pollution control agencies.

Presentation on EPA-State Partnership

Martha spent 12 years at ECOS. During her time there she helped produce [Cooperative Federalism 2.0](#), a paper written to stimulate and advance the conversations on how states and EPA could more fully define the state-EPA partnership from a policy, operational, and fiscal standpoint that ensures effective public health and environmental protections. Her key takeaways were:

- The state-EPA relationship has evolved from a parent-child relationship due to the maturation of programs, expertise, and experience in administering and enforcing at both the state and federal levels.
- States want more of a partnership with EPA that recognizes skills and expertise but does not duplicate efforts.
- All states agree that EPA must set minimum requirements for state protection of the environment and public health, but the states want more involvement in figuring out what the actual standards should be and what the requirements should be to meet those standards
- States can be very different physically, politically, environmentally and in terms of public health. EPA must recognize this and provide flexibility in how each state meets standards based on these differences.
- States must rely on EPA for science. The states don't have the resources or capacity to do robust scientific research or analysis. Hopefully, the states' need and support will help prevent science from being undermined by the current administration.
- EPA wants to give states more responsibility but not more money, and when states want to go beyond federal standards, EPA does not approve.
- The bottom line is that states want a strong relationship with EPA to ensure health and environmental protections.

Bill began by urging EPN to reach out to former state officials who have a lot of talent to offer. They will have an interest in participating and complementing what EPN does. He said he would be happy to help facilitate these connections.

He used the Clean Car rules as an example of where the current administration has gone wrong with cooperative federalism. The EPA and states worked cooperatively with California, manufacturers, other states, and the environmental community in a harmonized approach to create the standards. Trump then proposed weakening the standards for greenhouse gases and fuel efficiency and rescinding the waiver for CA to go further and for other states to opt into the CA program. If the federal government and states do not work together, the result will have a devastating impact on public health and the environment. Bill and Mary Becker wrote a paper on the impacts of the Trump proposal to roll back greenhouse gas vehicle emission standards: ["The Untold Story,"](#) which he shared with EPN.

Bill provided recommendations for a new administration in working with the states based on tested procedures from the past that are easy to do and send the message that the federal government cares.

1. Have a two-day workshop in all programmatic areas and reboot. Sort out roles and responsibilities among states and EPA with regard to funding, oversight, and enforcement.
2. Create work groups prior to proposals. EPA technical support staff and some policymakers should sit down with states and map out a general framework of what has and hasn't worked in the past before proceeding to the proposal phase. This provides for state buy-in and much greater respect for what the federal agency is trying to do.
3. There can not be too much discussion and outreach. Good things happen when there is communication and follow-up.

Following Martha and Bill's presentation, we opened the line for questions and suggestions. A few of the ideas that were generated included:

- Cooperative federalism is between EPN and states, so states must be involved in EPA restoring itself.
- EPN must engage those previously with state government and freely critique what is working and what is not.
- Tribes must be included and involved.
- There must be improvement in marketing environmental and public health issues by speaking to the hearts and minds of people and humanizing issues on a local level.
- Develop a transition plan for what a new EPA would look like.
- Give states more time if it is going to achieve a better environmental result.
- Push states rather than accommodate the lowest common denominator.
- Look at what has worked in the past rather than reinventing the wheel if it isn't necessary.