



# Messaging Package: Protecting Communities, Defending Science: EPA Enforcement and Safeguards Under Systematic Attack

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## Topline Message

The new House appropriations language isn't about "streamlining" EPA; it's about *disarming it*. With a 47% cut to enforcement and deliberate dismantling of case teams, this is a strategic assault on the very people who hold polluters accountable.

When EPA can't investigate violations or respond to contamination, communities are left defenseless, and polluters get a green light to harm our air, water, and health.

# Talking Points

## Dismantling EPA's Enforcement Capacity: Who Holds Polluters Accountable Now?

- The EPA's enforcement staff (scientists, engineers, attorneys) are the essential public servants holding polluters accountable when they illegally dump toxic pollution into our air and water.
- Administrator Lee Zeldin's structural changes, specifically breaking up enforcement case teams, mass buyouts, and layoffs, systematically dismantle this capacity.
- Separating enforcement attorneys from technical experts weakens EPA's ability to build strong cases and secure compliance, leaving violations unchecked.

## New House Language Escalates the Attack on EPA Enforcement

The newly released text of the FY2026 House Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill introduces sweeping provisions that would severely weaken the EPA's ability to hold polluters accountable:

- Massive cuts to enforcement capacity: The bill slashes EPA's budget to \$7.01 billion and targets the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) with 47% funding cuts; nearly 85% of its budget is payroll for inspectors, scientists, and legal staff. The remaining 15% supports:
  - Monitoring equipment to detect pollution in air and water
  - Lab analyses and expert witnesses to support prosecutions
  - Data systems and compliance tools
  - Protective gear and vehicles for criminal investigators
  - Grants to state enforcement programs
- "Workforce reshaping" justification is a cover for capacity destruction: The bill language endorses the agency's internal "right-sizing" plan, which includes

buyouts, layoffs, and structural separation of case teams, which directly undermines EPA's ability to build strong cases and respond swiftly to violations.

- Negligible savings, massive harm: The proposed cuts yield less than 1% of the increase to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) budget, while exposing communities to dangerous pollution and allowing violators to act with impunity.
- Coordinated attack on enforcement and safeguards: These riders work in tandem with regulatory rollbacks, like the repeal of the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) and blocked vehicle emissions rules, to gut both the rules and the personnel who enforce them.

## EPA Abandons Public Health Safeguards in Favor of Industry Profits

- EPA has weakened Clean Air Act permitting rules to fast-track fossil fuel projects, particularly to power artificial intelligence data centers:
  - Industries can now begin construction *before* securing air pollution controls, restarting mothballed fossil fuel plants with fewer restrictions.
  - Public input is curtailed, and air quality protections eroded — all for speculative economic gains tied to AI development.
- EPA has delayed coal ash monitoring and compliance until 2029 via a direct final rule:
  - Communities remain exposed to arsenic, lead, and mercury contamination.
  - Bypassing standard public engagement processes undermines transparency and accountability.

## Strategic Deregulation Endangers Vulnerable Communities

- These actions represent not isolated policy shifts but a deliberate pattern of dismantling science-based protections.

- By gutting Clean Air Act safeguards and postponing coal ash monitoring, EPA disproportionately endangers frontline communities already burdened by pollution.
- Eliminating environmental justice tools like EJSCREEN further abandons historically overburdened communities.

## Institutional Paralysis Shields Polluters

- Centralizing enforcement decisions at EPA headquarters creates deliberate delays:
  - Urgent interventions are stalled while approvals languish.
  - Polluters face less incentive to comply with environmental laws.
- The combination of enforcement bottlenecks and weakened safeguards creates regulatory paralysis, leaving communities unprotected.

## The Imperative for Vigilant Oversight and Public Action

- These policies reflect a coordinated agenda to shrink EPA's authority, dismantle environmental law, and favor industrial deregulation.
- Congress, state governments, and civil society must act urgently to reject these rollbacks:
  - Restore Clean Air Act permitting integrity.
  - Reverse delays in coal ash monitoring and compliance.
  - Defend EPA's enforcement workforce and ensure case teams remain intact and fully empowered.
- Environmental protection is not optional. It is foundational to public health, climate resilience, and democratic governance.

## Social Media Post Samples

### Possible Headlines:

- 47% Enforcement Cut. Zero Accountability.
- Who Protects Us When EPA Can't?
- EPA Gutted. Polluters Unchecked.

- When Enforcement is Dismantled, Communities Pay the Price.

## **LinkedIn/Facebook/Instagram**

Dismantling enforcement is not efficiency. It's abdication.

The new House Interior Appropriations language proposes slashing EPA enforcement by nearly 50%, breaking up enforcement case teams, and laying off staff. These aren't technical tweaks; they are tactical maneuvers to silence oversight.

Without enforcement:

- Polluters won't face consequences.
- Air and water violations will go unaddressed.
- Families will breathe dirtier air and drink unsafe water.

EPA's enforcement staff are the scientists, engineers, and attorneys who protect frontline communities. This proposal makes it easier to pollute and harder to hold anyone accountable.

We must speak out. This is not fiscal responsibility; it's a public health crisis by design. #SaveEPA

## **Twitter/Bluesky/Threads**

### **Post 1**

NEW: House language slashes EPA enforcement by 47%.

That means fewer inspectors. Fewer prosecutions. More pollution.

This isn't budget discipline; it's a polluter protection plan. #SaveEPA

### **Post 2**

EPA's enforcement staff are the line of defense against illegal dumping, toxic air, and contaminated water.

Congress wants to cut them.

No enforcement = no accountability. #SaveEPA

**Post 3**

A chemical spill. A refinery leak. Mercury in drinking water.

Who responds? EPA enforcement teams.

This House bill would dismantle them.

Communities will suffer while polluters profit. #SaveEPA

**Post 4**

The same budget that cuts 47% from EPA enforcement increases ICE funding by more than that entire cut.

This isn't about savings. It's about power.

And, public health is the casualty. #SaveEPA