

Congress Rejects Administration's Attacks on Health

What it means for EPA, public health, and the environment.

The Trump administration and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt made clear their mission to attack public health safeguards when they proposed cutting EPA's budget by nearly a third. But Congress – fearing public reaction to cutting popular clean air, water, and chemical safety programs – resoundingly rejected Trump's reckless budget proposal.

It was through the stories of real people and real communities suffering from dirty air, dirty water and dirty land that Congress saw an inevitable backlash to an assault on EPA. The result is a budget finalized by Congress that will maintain current funding levels for all EPA program areas and provide additional funds to programs that improve drinking water and clean up toxic waste sites. Here's what you need to know about the budget Congress just passed:

Superfund

The Administration sought to reduce Superfund allocation **by a third**. Instead, Congress **added \$66 million** to the pot, bringing its total to **\$1.15 billion**. Superfund supplies money to localities that must clean up toxic waste sites that plague communities with **exposure to dangerous chemicals and hazardous materials**.

Chemical evaluations

The Administration wanted to drastically cut chemical assessments under the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS), used to study the health impacts of chemicals and pollution. Instead, full IRIS funding is retained; it will receive \$21.6 million for FY18, and will remain in the agency's science office, the Office of Research and Development.

EPA's workforce

Trump and Pruitt have worked to hollow out EPA by **removing dedicated career employees** through buyouts and retirements, and the president's budget asked for nearly \$70 million to fund accelerated reductions in workforce. Congress provided no funding for what it called **"adverse personnel actions."**

Water

State revolving funds—which give states money to improve water infrastructure—for both **sewer and drinking water each received \$300 million**. EPA's National Estuary Program, which Trump proposed eliminating, received \$27.7 million, \$1 million above the previous year.

Lead

The Trump budget proposed eliminating grants to states for lead programs. Instead, Congress provided nearly \$19 million. The bill also creates two new lead programs: One for water **testing in schools and childcare facilities**; the other for general lead reduction and education efforts.

Geographic grants

Trump called for eliminating grants to fight pollution from **the Chesapeake Bay to South Florida, to the Great Lakes**. Congress rejected this and the programs will see an uptick of \$12 million in funding. The EPA's **Gulf of Mexico** program saw a \$4 million increase in funding, while the **Lake Pontchartrain** program funding remained level at \$948,000.

Climate

The president sought to cut \$12.6 million from a program dedicated to greenhouse gas reporting. Instead, the **program received level funding**.

Air

The administration requested for a reduction of nearly 30 percent for **state and local air quality management**. **Congress kept funding level** at \$228.2 million

Notable numbers from other departments

Department of Energy

The Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) division—which is critical to developing a **sustainable energy future**—was originally targeted by the administration for **a cut of more than half**. Congress **increased EERE programs** from \$2.1 billion to \$2.3 billion.

Elsewhere, the **Office of Science**, which sponsors groundbreaking scientific research & development **got a raise of \$800 million**, bringing its total budget to \$6.3 billion. ARPA-E, a semi-autonomous, futuristic research portion of DOE continues to enjoy **strong bipartisan support**, having its budget raised to **\$353 million**.

Department of the Interior

The Land and Water Conservation Fund will receive \$425 million, up \$25 million over last year. The funding bill also declined to include any anti-wildlife provisions, something sought by some in Congress and that would have expressly circumvented the science behind listing decisions. Specifically, the bill does *not* include provisions prohibiting protections for Gray Wolves Range-Wide, Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Preble's Jumping Mouse, or any species that lacks a current 5-Year Review, and requires the Secretary of the Interior to reissue final rules to delist wolves in Wyoming and the Great Lakes region and exempts those reissued rules from judicial review.

The Gulf of Mexico Energy Securities Act (GOMESA), a key source of Louisiana coastal restoration funding, was also maintained.

NOAA

NOAA's Sea Grant program received \$65 million. The National Estuarine Research Reserve Program increased from \$23 million to \$25 million. The budget also includes \$30 million in NOAA-administered coastal resilience grants.

What's next

The next funding fight has already started

Congress will soon turn its attention to drafting a budget for **FY2019**, which begins on October 1, 2018. The Trump administration released its proposed FY19 budget in early February, calling for **cuts to EPA to the tune of roughly 24%**. While Congress rejected significant cuts in FY18, it will be **under pressure from the White House** to aid its attacks on environmental and public health safeguards through appropriations made to EPA. **Scott Pruitt is expected on Capitol Hill** on April 26th to argue the failing merits of this proposed budget.

EPA remains a prime target for Trump, Pruitt and their allies in Congress. We have seen the many ways in which Pruitt has **sought to undermine the Agency's ability** to protect children and the environment. Continued **attacks on science, personnel, research, and enforcement** have all chipped away at EPA's capacity to hold polluters accountable and **keep American families healthy**.

Americans and EPA need more

EPA is already stretched **perilously thin**. Its budget has been **reduced by 21% since 2010** and, in real dollars, has **\$11 billion less than its budget in 1979**. **Its staffing is at its lowest level in 30 years**. This means that EPA is being asked to do more with less. This is not good enough for an agency responsible for keeping people healthy and our air, water and land clean. Going forward, Congress should not only maintain current funding levels, but begin to rebuild EPA's ability to protect American families, after decades of budget cuts.