



Scott Pruitt Can't Be Trusted

When the next Pruitt scandal breaks, he or his staff may try to provide an explanation, but as the record shows, you can count on Scott Pruitt and his EPA spokespeople being misleading in his initial response.

Here's the proof.

Scandal: Sweetheart deal on a lobbyist-owned condo.

Pruitt paid \$50/night, only for the nights he was in town to stay at the townhouse of a prominent lobbyist.

Pruitt's first [explanation](#):

"When you think of the townhouse, the rent last year. The owner of that is an Oklahoman. I've known him for years. He... has no clients that are before this agency, nor does his wife have any clients that have appeared before this agency. I've had ethics counsel here at the agency, the office of general counsel and ethics officials review the lease. They've actually looked at the lease... If you look at the lease it's very clear it's market value."

Truth:

This living arrangement seeps of corruption, including the [help of a staffer](#) to find the housing. The clients firm Williams & Jensen does have matters before the EPA. While Pruitt stayed there, the EPA cleared a hurdle to a new client's pipeline [being built](#). As for the ethics review, EPA's top ethics official has since said [he lacked key facts](#) about the arrangement when making his judgment. And as the [Washingtonian](#) found, \$50 a night at market rate doesn't quite get you a room as nice as he likely had

Scandal: Excessive raises to close staffers

The White House rejected a request for large raises for two staffers who came to the EPA from Oklahoma with Pruitt. After the requests were declined, EPA used an obscure provision of the Safe Drinking Water Act to provide the raises, totaling over \$80,000 in raises to relatively junior staffers.

Pruitt's first explanation:

He just learned about the raises, months after the request happened

Truth:

It's almost impossible to think that Pruitt wouldn't know about exorbitant raises given to colleagues he works with closely. The Associated Press [reported](#) that Pruitt approached the White House about the raises. At the very best, it shows a startling lack of awareness of personnel and poor management. However, considering Pruitt's close historical ties to the individuals who received the raises, it feels much more likely that the raises were prompted directly by Pruitt, even if he had others formally pursue them.

Scandal: First class flights costing over \$100,000 at taxpayers' expense

Pruitt often flew first class or charter and military planes at very high cost to taxpayers.

Pruitt and EPA staff [explanation](#):

"Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt said security decisions made by others have dictated he fly first class or on military jets at taxpayer expense.

"Unfortunately... we've had some incidents on travel dating back to when I first started serving in the March-April timeframe," Pruitt said during an interview at the New Hampshire Union Leader on Tuesday."

Truth:

Security experts [disagree](#) that first class is any safer, and a [bipartisan group](#) of Senators including Fischer and Kennedy commented they fly coach

Scandal: EPA cited a debunked study funded by the trucking industry in its decision to weaken rules on super-polluting trucks.

A now-debunked study composed by a Professor at Tennessee Tech with ties to industry was cited in EPA's proposal to weaken rules on trucks that pollute at rates considerably higher than regular models.

EPA's [first](#) explanation:

When it was revealed that the study was flawed and undertaken for political reasons, EPA said it "did not rely upon the study or even quote directly from it" in supporting the loophole for super polluting trucks.

Truth:

EPA's proposed rule in the [Federal Register](#) said, "In support, the petitioners included as an exhibit to their petition a letter from the President of the Tennessee Technological University ("Tennessee Tech"), which described a study recently conducted by Tennessee Tech."

Tennessee Tech [has withdrawn](#) the study after it discovered the study was sponsored by Fitzgerald, the nation's biggest glider manufacturer, and its research was conducted at a Fitzgerald facility. The EPA may still finalize the loophole for gliders in the coming months

Scandal: \$43k phone booth installed in Pruitt's office

Pruitt had a secure communications facility installed next to his office for \$43,000, despite the fact that EPA already has a secure communications facility on another floor. The EPA Inspector General is investigating.

EPA explanation:

"What you are referring to is a secured communication area in the administrator's office so secured calls can be received and made," EPA spokeswoman Liz Bowman [said in a statement](#). "Federal agencies need to have one of these so that secured communications, not subject to hacking from the outside, can be held. It's called a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF). This is something which a number, if not all, Cabinet offices have and EPA needs to have updated."

Truth:

The booth [was charged](#) as a "privacy booth for the administrator," rather than for security. However, "according to former agency employees, the EPA has long maintained a SCIF on a separate floor from the administrator's office, where officials with proper clearances can go to share information classified as secret."

Scandal: EPA contracted a partisan firm to monitor staffers, said they were just clipping news

A partisan political firm, Definers Public Affairs with an EPA no-bid contract to do "media monitoring" investigated the personal political leanings of EPA employees suspected of not supporting the Trump administration.

EPA's first [explanation](#):

An E.P.A. official vehemently defended the \$120,000 contract to Definers, saying it filled a need in the media office for an improved clipping service.

"Definers was awarded the contract to do our press clips at a rate that is \$87,000 cheaper than our previous vendor, and they are providing no other services," a spokesman for the E.P.A., Jahan Wilcox, wrote in an email.

Truth:

EPA [decided to drop](#) the Definers contract after news broke that one of the company's top lawyers had previously been digging for EPA employees who had criticized the Trump administration.