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December 11, 2003

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20460-0001

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

I am writing to bring to your attention new evidence that politics is interfering with science at EPA.

Attached is a letter I received yesterday from Jeff Ruch of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). PEER surveyed the scientists and managers in EPA's Region 8, which serves Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. With over 150 respondents, the survey found that "EPA staff members say the agency now faces unprecedented political pressure."

The findings are striking. Over three-quarters of responding scientists and managers reported that political considerations are more influential in key decisions than they were five years ago; over half believe that the Administration's political initiatives have taken precedence over protecting the environment; and over 40% of managers and supervisors fear retaliation for doing their jobs. More than two-thirds of managers disagreed that the senior management "is committed to providing the media and the public complete and accurate information on controversial topics."

Written comments from agency scientists are also telling. One agency scientist wrote that "this administration has politicized EPA to an extreme extent," while another wrote of the political climate at EPA that "human health & the environment should always be the Agency's overriding concern, not towing the party line as it comes down from the White House."

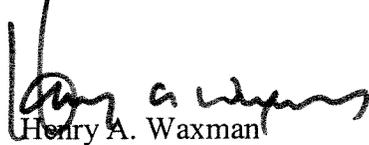
The picture that emerges is very troubling. EPA's credibility rests on its scientific integrity. If political agendas are allowed to overrule science, our environment and public health will suffer.

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I urge you to make protecting the scientific integrity of EPA one of your top priorities. With that goal in mind, I would like to know what concrete steps you will take (1) to determine the extent that politics have affected scientific decisions across EPA and (2) to restore the confidence of EPA professionals that their scientific work will be insulated from political interference.

Please provide me with your plan to address these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry A. Waxman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "H" and "W".

Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Minority Member

Enclosure