

Subcommittee on Environment 116th Congress Accomplishments

The Subcommittee on Environment, led by Chairman Harley Rouda, worked to combat the Trump Administration's war on science and efforts to rollback and undermine bedrock environmental and public health protections. The Subcommittee launched multiple investigations to fight for transparency from the Trump Administration and corporate polluters in order to ensure that all Americans have access to clean air and water.

PRESSED FOR REGULATION OF PFAS CHEMICALS

Trump Administration Action: At the beginning of the 116th Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had inadequately addressed and had not regulated per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and GenX chemicals, despite growing scientific consensus regarding the serious harms of these toxic substances.

Subcommittee Actions: Chairman Rouda held four Subcommittee hearings this Congress examining the dangers of PFAS chemicals and the need for strong federal regulatory action. At these hearings, the Subcommittee [pressed](#) corporations on their efforts to conceal the health risks of associated with PFAS exposure, [examined](#) the EPA's PFAS Action Plan, [evaluated](#) expert research, and [heard](#) from those personally impacted by the serious health effects of PFAS and widespread contamination.

On November 21, 2019, Chairman Rouda and Rep. Dan Kildee sent a [letter](#) to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler seeking information and documents concerning EPA's progress in protecting public health from the serious harms caused by exposure to PFAS. On October 21, 2020, Chairman Rouda sent a [letter](#) to the CEOs of DuPont and Chemours Company to request information about any continued use and reported discharges of PFOA chemicals at their facilities.

Accomplishment: The Subcommittee's investigation helped push PFAS as a legislative priority this Congress. On January 10, 2020, the House of Representatives passed [the PFAS Action Act](#) to clean up communities affected by PFAS contamination and protect Americans from these harmful chemicals. The bill included [two bipartisan amendments](#) co-led by Chairman Harley Rouda. At the September 10, 2019, [hearing](#) with chemical companies, even DuPont de Nemours agreed that PFOA should be designated a hazardous substance under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

EVALUATED FEMA'S NATURAL DISASTER RECOVERY AND PREPAREDNESS

Trump Administration Action: The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) failed to adequately prepare for and respond to the 2017 hurricane season, including Hurricanes Maria and Irma. Serious concerns remain regarding whether these failures were adequately addressed by FEMA, as the agency currently leads the federal government's concurrent response to both the coronavirus pandemic and an array of record-breaking natural disasters in 2020.

Subcommittee Actions: On May 6, 2019, Chairman Cummings, Subcommittee Chairman Rouda, and Rep. Stacy Plaskett led all Democratic Members of the Committee in a [letter](#) to the White House seeking documents regarding the Trump Administration’s response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. On July 2, 2019, the Chairs sent another [letter](#) to Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney seeking compliance with the May 2019 letter.

Despite months of the Trump Administration’s stonewalling, Chairman Rouda held three hearings on natural disaster preparedness this Congress. The [first](#), on June 26, 2019, discussed the need for the Trump Administration to take into account climate change in disaster relief planning. The [second](#), a field hearing in California on August 20, 2019, examined the status of wildfire recovery efforts in California, the health and environmental impacts of longer and more destructive wildfire seasons, and the state and federal government’s wildfire mitigation strategies. On June 8, 2020, Chairman Rouda and other Subcommittee Members sent a [letter](#) to FEMA requesting a hearing on the actions taken by FEMA to prepare for the response and recovery efforts for natural disasters in the midst of ongoing efforts to combat the coronavirus crisis. On July 24, 2020, FEMA Administrator Peter Gaynor testified before the Subcommittee in a [public hearing](#). On September 30, 2020, Chairwoman Maloney and Subcommittee Chairman Rouda issued a [statement](#) in response to a [report](#) from the Inspector General (IG) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which echoed findings from Ranking Member Cummings 2018 staff report.

Accomplishment: At the July 24, 2020 hearing, FEMA Administrator Gaynor diverged from the Trump Administration by acknowledging the link between climate change and intensifying storms and [admitting](#) that climate change should be a factor in natural disaster planning. He also [admitted](#) that, almost three years after the hurricanes struck Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, residents are still experiencing inexcusable lags in efforts to recover. FEMA also provided the Subcommittee with over 7,000 documents regarding the agency’s preparation and response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria. HHS provided the Subcommittee with over 5,000 documents, and the White House provided almost 3,000 documents regarding the responses to Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

COMBATTED CLIMATE CHANGE DENIAL AND PRESENTED SOLUTIONS TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Trump Administration Action: The Trump Administration has taken numerous anti-climate actions, such as withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement and removing climate change from FEMA’s strategic plan.

Subcommittee Actions: Chairman Rouda held four hearings and one briefing focused on climate change during the 116th Congress—including examining the [fossil fuel industry’s role](#) in denying climate science, the impact of climate change on [natural disasters](#), the current [public health](#) impacts of climate change, the [economic costs](#) of inaction, and [solutions](#) to the climate crisis. On September 24, 2020, Chairman Rouda released a [staff report](#) that provided the first estimate of what a commitment from the United States to keep global warming below 2-degrees Celsius would mean for the health of residents in the State of California. Chairman Rouda also released staff reports detailing the health benefits of keeping global warming below 2 degrees

Celsius for the states of New York, Illinois, Texas, Florida, Kansas, Connecticut, Colorado, Georgia, New Hampshire, Maryland, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Michigan, Vermont and Virginia.

Accomplishment: On September 28, 2020, Chairwoman Maloney and Subcommittee Chairman Rouda introduced [The Federal Agency Climate PREP Act](#) to require climate change adaptation planning and coordination at all federal agencies. The bill was the result of Full Committee and Subcommittee hearings regarding actions the federal government can take to combat the climate crisis.

CONDUCTED OVERSIGHT OVER APPARENT POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN PEBBLE MINE PERMITTING PROCESS

Trump Administration Action: The EPA [bowed](#) to political influence and reversed its opposition to Pebble Mine, a proposed copper and gold mine in Bristol Bay, Alaska.

Subcommittee Actions: On August 10, 2020, Chairwoman Maloney, Subcommittee Chairman Rouda, and Rep. Jackie Speier sent a [letter](#) to the Inspectors General at the Department of Defense and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers requesting an investigation into the Army Corps' environmental review of the Pebble Limited Partnership's permit application after press reports [indicated](#) the Army Corps failed to provide a proper environmental review. The Members also sent a [letter](#) to EPA Inspector General Sean O'Donnell requesting an investigation into the reversal of its Proposed Determination under section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act.

Accomplishment: Pressure from the public, the Subcommittee, and other House Committees forced the Army Corps of Engineers to deny a permit for the proposed mine.

EXAMINED THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF PLASTIC PRODUCTION AND POLLUTION

Trump Administration Action: The EPA refused to fulfill its responsibility to enforce environmental regulations and make scientifically sound permitting decisions to reduce the petrochemical industry's serious and ongoing pollution—and the resulting negative effects on air quality and public health. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration has conducted inadequate oversight over the bottled water industry.

Subcommittee Actions: On March 3, 2020, Chairman Rouda and Vice Chair Rashida Tlaib [launched an investigation](#) into bottled water industry practices, requesting documents from Nestlé Waters North America regarding the extraction, bottling, and selling of America's groundwater for financial gain. On July 7, 2020, the Subcommittee held a [virtual briefing](#) on the effects of plastics pollution on Americans' health during the coronavirus crisis.

Accomplishment: At the July 7, 2020 [briefing](#), all the briefers, including the President and CEO of the Plastics Industry Association and Republican briefer, agreed there is a solid waste problem in the United States and urged Congress to advance legislation, such as [H.R. 5845, the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act](#).

DEMANDED A NATIONAL MORATORIUM ON WATER SHUTOFFS

Trump Administration Action: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) refused to issue a nationwide moratorium on drinking water shutoffs during the coronavirus pandemic.

Subcommittee Action: On October 5, 2020, Chairman Rouda and Vice Chair Tlaib released a [video report](#) pressing for a national moratorium on water shutoffs and immediate restoration of service for homes that have already had their water shut off. The Subcommittee also sent a [letter](#) that same day to the CDC requesting a national moratorium on water shutoffs, similar to the CDC's September moratorium on evictions.

Accomplishment: The House passed the HEROES Act on May 15, 2020, which included a national moratorium on water shutoffs. After the [letter](#) was sent to the CDC, more than 120 organizations echoed the Subcommittee's letter to the CDC urging for a national moratorium on water shutoffs. California, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin all have comprehensive water shutoff moratoriums in effect, and cities such as Detroit, Michigan have extended their moratoriums on water shutoffs until 2022.

INVESTIGATED MARATHON PETROLEUM CHEMICAL LEAKS

Trump Administration Action: The EPA systematically rolled back protections that were implemented to prevent corporations like Marathon Petroleum from negatively impacting the air and water quality in low-income and minority communities—including at Marathon's refinery in Detroit, Michigan. The EPA also refused to investigate and hold corporations accountable for chemical leaks.

Subcommittee Actions: On September 16, 2019, the Subcommittee held a [field hearing](#) in Detroit to address air and water quality in Michigan and explore how communities near the Marathon Refinery in Detroit are affected by chemical leaks. On February 6, 2020, Chairman Rouda and Vice Chair Tlaib sent a follow-up [letter](#) asking the EPA to investigate a September 12, 2019, chemical release incident, as well as a [letter](#) to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Marathon Petroleum Corporation requesting information regarding toxic chemical leaks at the Detroit facility.

Accomplishment: Marathon Petroleum produced documents and provided a briefing on the chemical leaks. The Subcommittee's work pressured Marathon to take steps to better engage and work with the community.

LEGISLATION AUTHORED BY CHAIRMAN ROUDA

PASSED HOUSE

- On January 10, 2020, the House passed the [PFAS Action Act](#) to clean up communities affected by PFAS contamination and protect Americans from these harmful chemicals. The bill included [two bipartisan amendments](#) co-led by Chairman Rouda. The first makes it illegal for industrial facilities to introduce PFAS into sewage treatment systems without first disclosing information about those substances. The second requires the EPA

Administrator to review and develop effluent standards, pretreatment standards, and water quality criteria for PFAS under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, as well as authorizing \$100 million in federal grants for each year from 2021 through 2025 to publicly-owned treatment works to implement pretreatment standards. Senator Thomas Carper introduced a Senate companion.

PASSED COMMITTEE

- On May 8, 2019, Chairman Rouda introduced the [PFAS User Fee Act of 2019](#) to ensure that polluters pay ongoing water treatment costs associated with PFAS chemical contamination by requiring PFAS manufacturers to pay a fee into a trust fund that would be used to provide grant funding to communities and water systems dealing with contamination. On September 26, 2019, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce [passed](#) this bill out of the Committee.

SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

- On September 29, 2020, Chairwoman Maloney and Subcommittee Chairman Rouda introduced the [Federal Agency Climate PREP Act](#) to require climate change adaptation planning and coordination at all federal agencies. Senator Amy Klobuchar introduced a Senate companion.
- On October 9, 2020, Chairman Rouda introduced the [Securing America's Nuclear Waste Act](#). The bill seeks to address the large quantities of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste currently stored on-site at decommissioning and decommissioned nuclear reactors across the country by studying the risk factors and effects of current storage options, examining the economic benefits of consolidated interim storage (CIS), and creating a more transparent and equitable system for long-term storage through an auction process or other market-based system for selecting CIS facilities.