

**Opening Statement of Gina McCarthy
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
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Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. It is an honor to serve as Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA's mission, to protect human health and the environment, is important to every one of us, and our families, and I understand and appreciate this Committee's keen interest in the EPA's work.

In order to best achieve EPA's mission, one of the themes for my tenure as Administrator has been "embracing EPA as a high performing organization." This means using our limited resources effectively, supporting our talented and dedicated workforce so that EPA employees have the tools they need to do the important work we ask of them every

day, and ensuring that the Agency continues to rely on a faithful application of the law and science.

The overwhelming majority of the approximately 15,000 EPA employees are dedicated, hardworking, professional public servants. I personally remain very proud of both the EPA's achievements in protecting human health and the environment on behalf of the American people and of the EPA employees who work hard every day to make those achievements possible. But I also know that over the last few years there have been examples of a few EPA employees who have engaged in serious misconduct. While I firmly believe these employees are isolated examples, I believe we can always do better. To that end, we have made a number of changes to agency management processes and procedures and strive for continued improvement in this area. While not the subject of today's hearing, with the committee's encouragement we have been working closely with our inspector general to enable the agency to more expeditiously take administrative action with regard to certain types of employee misconduct. The agency and the OIG now have biweekly

meetings to discuss the status of OIG's investigations into employee misconduct and have agreed upon a set of procedures and timelines for information sharing in certain categories of cases. These meetings and procedures have helped to facilitate the agency's ability to take action more quickly upon completion of the OIG investigations. The Agency and the OIG sent a joint letter to the Committee outlining this progress earlier this year.

As I understand it, today's hearing is focused primarily on the events surrounding a misconduct situation which occurred in 2011 at our Region 5 office in Chicago. While the misconduct at the root of this case occurred before my tenure as Administrator, it is my understanding that in this particular case a Region 5 supervisor took action upon learning of the alleged misconduct and the individual was subsequently held accountable and no longer works for the agency. While there were some difficulties and likely some miscommunications among offices within the region that may have created some confusion among those involved, through the efforts of all involved, disciplinary actions were

taken that resulted in the subject employee no longer being a federal employee. I expect all managers to take appropriate corrective and disciplinary actions when they learn of potential misconduct by one of their employees, regardless of that employee's position at the agency.

Harassment of any kind in EPA workplaces is intolerable. In December 2014, I reaffirmed the agency's commitment to prohibit harassment in the workplace through an email to the entire agency. In January, I sent a second agency-wide email reminding everyone of the OIG's important role in rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse, at the agency, ensuring employees were aware of their ability to contact the OIG Hotline about a matter.

The agency also recognized a need to provide managers with clear guidance on what to do if they become aware of an allegation of harassment. Earlier this year, the first-ever comprehensive set of procedures evaluating allegations of harassment were developed and sent to the agency's five unions for bargaining. Once those discussions are concluded, we will finalize the order formalizing the agency's very

first procedures for addressing allegations of workplace harassment.

The order will provide for uniformity and transparency about expectations related to processing complaints of harassment; procedures for reporting and responding to complaints; and guidance for engaging in related fact-finding and decision making. We hope to conclude this process in the upcoming months. Having formal procedures to implement the agency's anti-harassment policy will provide additional clarity for managers and employees in preventing and stopping harassment of any kind.

In closing, I am honored to serve the agency and the people of the United States. I am proud of the work accomplished every day by the employees of EPA and excited about the progress we are making as an agency. With that, I look forward to any questions you may have.



Gina McCarthy is the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Appointed by President Obama in 2009 as Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, Gina McCarthy has been a leading advocate for common-sense strategies to protect public health and the environment.

Previously, McCarthy served as the Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. During

her career, which spans over 30 years, she has worked at both

the state and local levels on critical environmental issues and helped coordinate policies on economic growth, energy, transportation and the environment.

McCarthy received a Bachelor of Arts in Social Anthropology from the University of Massachusetts at Boston and a joint Master of Science in Environmental Health Engineering and Planning and Policy from Tufts University.

When she is not in D.C., McCarthy lives in the Greater Boston area with her husband and dog, just a short bike ride away from their three children, Daniel, Maggie, and Julie.