

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
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May 3, 2018

The Honorable E. Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

One month ago, we wrote to you regarding troubling reports of your inappropriate, below market rental agreement with J. Steven Hart and his wife.¹ We have not received a response to that letter, but are compelled to write to you again regarding new developments that deepen our concerns.

Despite your earlier claims that J. Steven Hart had no clients with business before EPA, it is now clear that Mr. Hart did represent clients with business before your agency and, in fact, lobbied you on their behalf. On April 21st, it was revealed that you had met with J. Steven Hart and an executive associated with Smithfield Foods, one of his clients.² Now, we have received documents from EPA which appear to reveal that Mr. Hart represented multiple clients with business before EPA and lobbied on their behalf. These clients include Coca-Cola, the Puerto Rico Financial Control Board, and Smithfield.

One particularly problematic document, attached to this letter, shows that the same Smithfield executive who accompanied J. Steven Hart to a meeting with you apparently nominated three individuals to fill spots on the EPA's Science Advisory Board ("SAB"). This document also indicates that J. Steven Hart lobbied the EPA in favor of those nominations. The document is heavily redacted, including the names of the three individuals, but the effort to place those individuals on the SAB is clear.

¹ Letter from Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr., Rep. Paul Tonko, and Rep. Diana DeGette, to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt (Apr. 2, 2018).

² *Scott Pruitt Met With Lobbyist Whose Wife Rented Him a \$50-a-Night Condo*, New York Times (Apr. 21, 2018).

Since last year, we have been deeply concerned about your efforts to remove academic scientists from the SAB in favor of industry representatives. You unjustly removed or failed to renew 21 scientists who received EPA grants, later saying that the move was motivated by “an appearance of a lack of independence.”³ Although you pledged to provide the Committee with examples of scientists with such an appearance of a lack of independence,⁴ you never did.

The removal of these scientists created an unprecedented number of vacancies on the SAB and large gaps in scientific expertise. In November, we joined with several other members to raise concerns about the removal of these scientists and its meaning for the overall makeup of the SAB.⁵ That letter also went unanswered.

In the intervening months, we have seen numerous scientists employed by oil and gas companies, chemical companies, and tobacco companies added to the SAB. As we said in November, polluting industries appear to have viewed the SAB vacancies as opportunities for generous favors. The attached letter makes clear that J. Steven Hart sought those opportunities on behalf of his client.

In light of this very serious development, we ask that you respond to the following questions by May 10, 2018:

1. Provide the names of the three individuals recommended for inclusion on the SAB by Smithfield and J. Steven Hart, and clarify whether they have been included on the SAB or are currently being considered for inclusion.
2. Provide the long overdue response to our November letter on the SAB.
3. Provide the overdue response to our April 2nd letter on your lease with J. Steven Hart and his wife.

³ House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Hearing on the Mission of the Environmental Protection Agency*, 115th Cong., (Dec. 7, 2017).

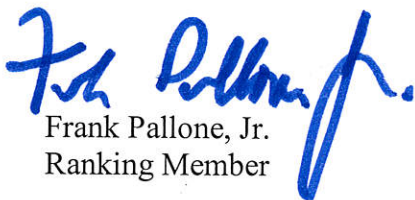
⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Letter from Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr., Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, Rep. Paul Tonko, Rep. Donald Beyer, and Rep. Diana DeGette to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt (Nov. 3, 2017).

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Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Paul D. Tonko
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Kathy Castor
Vice Ranking Member

Cc: The Honorable Greg Walden, Chairman
The Honorable John Shimkus, Chairman, Subcommittee on Environment
The Honorable Gregg Harper, Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
The Honorable Joe Barton, Vice Chairman