

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 25, 2017

Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our serious concerns with your administration's decision to freeze grants administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Freezing EPA grants and contracts, even temporarily, could delay critical projects in states across the country, all while undermining fundamental public health and environmental protections. We have heard the freeze is temporary to allow for review of grants and contracts, but we remain concerned about the impacts of the freeze on Oregon projects. We therefore ask that you complete this review process as quickly as possible.

Through various programs and initiatives, the EPA is responsible for maintaining the integrity of America's air, land, and water quality. The EPA issues millions of dollars annually in grants to help communities in every state identify, research, and clean up contaminated sites. Just last year, Clackamas County, Oregon, was awarded grant funding to help clean up several properties contaminated by prior industrial use to be reused for a community economic development project. The City of Tigard was also awarded a grant to clean up several downtown properties for future productive development and reuse. An EPA grant also helped educate high school students in Baker City on the impacts that Brownfield sites can have on surrounding property values and the environment. Additionally, the City of Eugene received an EPA grant to develop a brownfields inventory and conduct environmental site assessments.

The threat of air and water contamination is all too real for many Americans. Cities like Portland, Oregon continue to be threatened by drinking water contaminated by high levels of lead. Without EPA-funded grants to address outdated water infrastructure, communities that need help the most will be left to pick up the tab.

The EPA has had recent success in Oregon addressing air quality concerns in Portland neighborhoods. In 2015, there was a discovery that heavy metals including cadmium and arsenic had been emitted for decades into the air of Portland neighborhoods at dangerous levels. EPA technical assistance was essential in gaining a better understanding of pollution levels, identification of point sources and assessment of public health risks.

At this point, it is unclear how the freeze will impact awarded and future grants in Oregon and across the country, putting important projects on hold and leaving communities unsure of how to proceed.

Americans deserve to know whether the EPA will protect their health and safety and defend their communities from air, land, and water contamination. Unfortunately, this freeze creates uncertainty and could have negative consequences that affects every air breathing and water drinking American. Given these concerns, we respectfully ask that the review of EPA grants and contracts be completed as quickly as possible.


Additionally, your order directing the EPA and other agencies' staff not to respond to press or Congressional inquiries flies in the face of the Constitution by directly undermining Congress's oversight authority. We hope this does not set the precedent for future actions by your administration.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working closely with you on this important matter.


Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator



Kurt Schrader
U.S. Representative



Suzanne Bonamici
U.S. Senator



Peter DeFazio
U.S. Representative



Earl Blumenauer
U.S. Representative