

Chairman Bob Gibbs (R-OH)
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment
Hearing on “The President’s Fiscal Year 2016 Budget and Administration Priorities for the
U.S. *Environmental Protection Agency*”

March 18, 2015
Opening Statement
(Remarks as Prepared)

When Congress wrote the Clean Water Act and other federal environmental statutes some 40 years ago, it envisioned the federal government and the states would be equal partners in solving the Nation’s environmental problems. For many years that federal-state partnership has worked well.

However, in the past few years, we have seen a change in the approach taken by the *Environmental Protection Agency* (EPA) that may undermine the balanced federal-state partnership that has long existed. EPA is now taking away the flexibility states and local governments need to address their environmental issues. EPA is aggressively moving forward simultaneously on several regulatory fronts, with the result that states and local governments, as well as the private regulated community, are facing increasing regulatory, enforcement, and financial pressures to address a multitude of burdensome regulatory requirements that recently have become EPA priorities.

I am particularly concerned about EPA’s proposed Waters of the United States rule. This proposed rule will substantially increase the regulatory burdens for states, local governments, and businesses, especially small businesses. This proposed rule is on top of other unfunded mandates advanced by the EPA, with the result that many local communities and private entities are now increasingly struggling with how to pay for complying with these mandates. EPA’s aggressive actions have created financial pressures and regulatory uncertainty for states, local governments, and the regulated community, and have had a chilling effect on the Nation’s economy and job creation.

The EPA budget put forth from the Administration for fiscal year 2016 does nothing to alleviate my concerns. While EPA is imposing more unfunded regulatory burdens on communities, businesses, and citizens, the Administration at the same time is calling for a reduction in spending for programs that assist communities in their efforts to come into compliance with those regulations, like the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) program. Sadly, not only is the EPA adding to the burden of rules and regulations and reducing programs to help state and local government come into compliance, but the EPA is also putting more “boots on the ground” to track down those who have difficulty coming into compliance, with questionable benefits to the environment.

We all want clean water. However, we also need to have a strong economy so we can make the investments that new regulations require. And we need EPA, as the partner agency, to work toward restoring its trust with state and local governments. Today is not the day to impose more burdens on the American people. We need to help people come into compliance with the multitude of regulations we already have, and make significant progress in developing and creating long-term jobs and a stronger economy before we can tolerate more expensive regulations.