

Senator Carper, EPW Democrats Led the Way in Pressuring Pruitt

[From the day Scott Pruitt was confirmed to serve as EPA Administrator](#), Senator Carper, who serves as the top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, called attention to Mr. Pruitt's "**unacceptably casual approach to meeting obligations as a public servant.**" He noted that "**an unfortunate pattern**" of obstruction had emerged during his confirmation hearing and warned his colleagues that this behavior would "**haunt us if Mr. Pruitt is confirmed to lead the EPA.**"

In the seventeen months since, he and his fellow EPW Democrats have kept up the pressure to hold Pruitt accountable.

Quick highlights:

- Senator Carper sent more than 70 oversight letters to former Administrator Pruitt
- Requests made by EPW Democrats initiated multiple investigations into Pruitt's conduct
- The investigative work of EPW Democrats brought multiple Pruitt violations to light

Full timeline below:

1/12/17: Senators Carper, Whitehouse and others highlight troubling deficiencies with Pruitt's financial disclosure forms and ask EPA ethics officials for details on how they intended to make sure Pruitt complies with ethics rules.

5/1/17: Senators Carper, Whitehouse, and others [raise concerns](#) about Administrator Pruitt's plans to violate the Hatch Act by speaking at a political fundraiser in his capacity as Administrator.

RESULT: On 4/27/17 Pruitt [cancelled](#) his attendance only after Senator Whitehouse [filed](#) an ethics complaint about the expected attendance.

7/6/17: Senators Whitehouse, Carper, and others [ask the Government Accountability Office](#) to review EPA's selection process for its advisory committee after the agency unexpectedly dismissed 12 scientists from its Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) and announced plans to remove 38 more.

RESULT: On 7/20/17 GAO [accepted the request](#) to review.

8/4/17: Senator Carper [asks the EPA IG](#) to investigate Pruitt's travel habits and spending in light of [reports](#) that he "spent 43 out of 92 days from March through May in Oklahoma or traveling to or from the state."

RESULT: The Inspector General [accepted the request](#).

8/18/17: Senators Carper and Whitehouse [ask GAO](#) to investigate Pruitt's abuse of the Safe Drinking Water Act to hire political appointees who were hired for purposes unrelated to the Act.

RESULT: GAO [accepted](#) this request in September

8/18/17: Senator Carper [releases](#) new information regarding reports that EPA political appointees verbally directed EPA scientists to delete \$500 million in economic benefits of the Clean Water Rule repeal before the rule was sent to OMB for review.

11/9/17: After EPA announced it would exclude scientists who received EPA grants from serving on advisory committees, Senators Carper, Whitehouse and others [sent a letter to GAO](#) supplementing their July 2017 request for an investigation of EPA's hiring process for such committees.

12/18/17: Senator Carper asks the EPA Inspector General to expand his existing investigation into Pruitt's travel to include Pruitt's recently reported trip to Morocco to promote natural gas exports, which is outside the scope of EPA's mission.

RESULT: The Inspector General [accepted](#) the request

1/9/18: Senators Carper and Whitehouse [reveal documents](#) from a whistleblower showing that two EPA advisory committee members were flagged for conflicts of interest and lack of expertise prior to their appointment, but were appointed anyway despite concerns raised by career staff.

1/9/18: Senators Carper and Udall and others request a GAO investigation into EPA's possible violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act in building a soundproof phone booth in the Administrator's office.

RESULT: GAO accepted the request to investigate and on April 16, 2018 [found](#) that EPA broke two federal laws when it spent \$43,000 to construct the phone booth, in excess of the \$5,000 permitted.

1/10/18: Senator Whitehouse [released](#) a version of a 12-step "action plan" on environmental regulatory rollbacks written by coal magnate and Chairman of Murray Energy Robert Murray, and asks for any versions of this plan sent to EPA. EPA has taken several of these recommendations.

2/14/18: Senators Carper and Whitehouse [ask GAO](#) to supplement their July 2017 request to investigate EPA's process for hiring EPA advisory committee members, in light of new documents obtained from a whistleblower showing EPA political appointees who were hired over blowbacks

RESULT: On March 6, 2018, GAO [accepted](#) the request.

2/15/18: Senators Carper and Peters [release documents](#) obtained from EPA showing that first- or business-class travel has been routinely authorized for Administrator Pruitt during due to "exceptional security circumstances," and that the Administrator has traveled first-class on many domestic trips, including a multi-destination trip that incurred almost \$11,000 in first-class fare costs.

3/6/18: Senators Carper and Whitehouse [release new information](#) from a whistleblower showing that Nino Perrotta, Pruitt's lead security agent, directed a contract to sweep the Administrator's office to his own business partner, in violation of federal contracting rules and internal EPA processes.

UPDATE: Perrotta [left EPA](#) on May 1, and the EPA Inspector General continues to investigate many security-related issues.

3/28/18: Senator Carper [brings to light](#) new information the Senator received indicating that senior political staffer Samantha Dravis did not attend work or perform her duties for much - if not all - of November 2017 thru January 2018, but was still paid for that time.

RESULT: The Inspector General [agreed](#) to the request to investigate.

UPDATE: Dravis [resigned](#) the same week Senator Carper's letter was sent.

4/5/18: Following troubling [reports](#), Senators Carper and Whitehouse ask the EPA IG to expand the existing investigation into Pruitt's use of the Safe Drinking Water Act hiring authority to look into whether Pruitt and/or

his staff used this hiring process to provide \$56,765 and \$28,130 raises to favored staff, in light of recent reporting directly refuting Administrator Pruitt's statement that he did not know about the raises.

UPDATE: The Inspector General released a Management Alert during the course of his investigation.

4/10/18: Senators Carper and Whitehouse [release](#) new information and documents from a whistleblower showing that the justification for Pruitt's security spending – including his nearly 20-person 24/7 security detail, his use of first-class travel, and his request for a security sweep and biometric locks – [was baseless](#) and that intelligence officials found there to be no specific credible direct threat to Pruitt.

4/12/2018: Senators Carper, Whitehouse, and others release a [letter](#) following their staffs' meeting with former Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations at EPA, Kevin Chmielewski, who provided new examples of Pruitt's ethical violations and waste and abuse of public funds and resources. These allegations include that Pruitt made several expenditures on his office in addition to the soundproof phone booth and in excess of the legal limit, that one of Pruitt's senior aides Millan Hupp searched for real estate for Pruitt, Pruitt's affinity for international travel and luxury spending, that employees who opposed the spending and unethical conduct were retaliated against, and that Pruitt often exceeded his per diems and sometimes required his subordinates to cover the difference.

4/23/2018: Senators Carper, Whitehouse, and others [release new information and documents](#) obtained from a confidential whistleblower casting serious doubt on the legality and usefulness of Pruitt's office security sweep and private phone booth, including that the Administrator's office was not cleared for classified communications by March 2017, that the phone booth in the Administrator's office was not a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, that Perrotta directed the contract to his business partner without regard for National Security Council regulations, and that intelligence officials found the sweep to be inadequate.

4/24/2018: Senators Carper, Whitehouse, and others [ask EPA's top ethics official Kevin Minoli](#) for proof that Nino Perrotta had received ethics clearance to be a "principal" in Sequoia Security Group, a security firm founded by Mr. Perrotta. The Senators also noted that an "Approval of Request for Outside Activity/Employment" released to the New York Times was legally deficient for several reasons.

4/25/2018: Senators Carper and Whitehouse [release new information and documents](#) they obtained from a confidential whistleblower confirming that Pruitt knew about exorbitant staff raises to two of his closest aides before they were awarded -- in contradiction to his public denials that he knew about the large raises.

5/3/2018: Senators Carper and Whitehouse [introduce new information](#) regarding Pruitt's cancelled trip to Israel, including Republican donor Sheldon Adelson's involvement in encouraging the trip, EPA's questionable award of a research agreement to WaterGen, an Israeli company with close ties to Adelson that met with Pruitt at Adelson's request, and Trump Organization consultant and WaterGen U.S. CEO Ed Russo's role in delivering WaterGen's technology to EPA offices.

5/9/2018: Senators Carper, Whitehouse, and others [release a description](#) of examples of Mr. Pruitt contradicting himself and/or misleading Congress, including statements that he did not know about the cost of the phone booth, that the phone booth is not and was not intended to be a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, that the exorbitant staff raises were granted without his knowledge, that he knew of no instance of retaliation against staffers who objected to his spending, that one whistleblower who claimed retaliation had left the agency last year and was not retaliated against, that he was invited to Morocco by that country's ambassador in order to "negotiate the environmental chapter" of a free trade agreement, that the EPA Inspector General himself wrote the threat assessment memo that Pruitt relied on to justify his security spending, and that he did not know whether Samantha Dravis appeared for work for a 3-month period.

5/10/2018: Senator Carper joined Senator Udall and others in [demanding](#) that Administrator Pruitt file a complete version of the legally-required Antideficiency Act report and notifications of additional expenditures, following GAO's determination EPA violated two federal spending laws when paying for his phone booth.

5/16/2018: Senators Carper and Whitehouse ask the EPA Inspector General to [investigate](#) Nino Perrotta and the manner in which he and the Administrator worked together to advance the Administrator's security requests, in light of new information released by the Senators showing that Administrator Pruitt requested a security sweep of his office; that Nino Perrotta circumvented the proper process for selecting a qualified contractor and instead arranged for his business colleague, Edwin Steinmetz, to conduct the security sweep without disclosing his own business relationship with Mr. Steinmetz; and that Mr. Perrotta may have directed the use of an EPA purchase card to pay for the sweep without authorization. The Senators also released an email obtained from a confidential whistleblower in which Mr. Perrotta advised others at EPA that Pruitt "encourages the use" of lights and sirens by his motorcade – a deviation from past EPA practice.

5/21/2018: Senators Van Hollen, Carper, Udall, and Whitehouse [ask Administrator Pruitt](#) for proof that he has and will comply with all federal regulations governing his creation of a legal defense fund, and that he will refuse donations that may challenge his impartiality.

5/31/2018: Senators Udall, Carper, and Whitehouse release internal EPA emails and asked the EPA Inspector General [to investigate](#) whether Pruitt violated federal regulations when he used a top aide, Millan Hupp, to conduct a real estate search on Mr. Pruitt's behalf, without compensating her and apparently using official time and resources.

UPDATE: Millan Hupp [announces her resignation](#) on June 6th. Another top EPA aide, Sarah Greenwalt, [announces](#) on June 7th that she is also leaving the agency.

6/7/2018: Senators Carper and Whitehouse highlight several instances in which EPA claimed it did not have documents responsive to Congressional requests but later released those or related records in response to Freedom of Information Act requests, and that Administrator Pruitt's [public calendars](#) did not show meetings which were discussed in publicly released emails.

6/7/2018: Senators Udall, Carper, and Whitehouse ask the EPA Inspector General to investigate recent reports that Pruitt used his official position and EPA staff to [find business opportunities for his wife](#) at Chick-Fil-A and Concordia, and further investigate whether Pruitt pursued additional business opportunities to enrich himself or any members of this family.

6/12/2018: Senators Carper and Udall [urged](#) EPA Designated Agency Ethics Official Kevin Minoli to ensure that Pruitt's final public financial disclosure is fully accurate and complete, and accounts for various gifts (including sports tickets, meals, unpaid assistance from a subordinate, air travel, and below market-rate rent), reimbursed travel, and spousal sources of income. The Senators also ask several questions related to when Mr. Minoli was first made aware of Pruitt's efforts to seek employment for his wife using official resources.