

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 25, 2017

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

We write to express our grave concerns regarding reports that the Administration plans to abolish Region 5 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as part of the fiscal year 2018 budget. EPA Region 5 is critical to protecting the air, drinking water, and health of residents in the six Great Lakes states the region serves and closing its headquarters in Chicago would make EPA less efficient and effective in its efforts to protect human health and the environment. Accordingly, we request that you commit to preserving EPA Region 5.

EPA's Chicago office regularly works closely with state and local governments to effectively address the unique challenges and needs of the region, including protecting 90 percent of the nation's fresh water supply and a significant portion of the Mississippi River watershed from invasive species, harmful algal blooms, and industrial pollution—preserving the source of drinking water for more than 30 million Americans. Region 5 experts were among the first scientists to alert officials to the elevated lead levels in Flint, Michigan's drinking water. Following the 2014 drinking water ban in Toledo, Ohio due to microcystin contamination from harmful algal blooms, Region 5 assisted Ohio and Michigan in upgrading drinking water treatment facilities to protect citizens in the region.

Additionally, as manager of the Great Lakes National Program Office, the EPA Region 5 Administrator plays a key role in ensuring the U.S. meets its international commitments under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The Office also works with Canada to ensure that the Great Lakes continue to support a \$5 trillion economy with more than 51 million jobs. The day-to-day responsibilities of carrying out the Agreement and our promises to Canada would be jeopardized if EPA Region 5 was eliminated.

Region 5 is also responsible for more Superfund sites than any other region and EPA Region 5 experts play a vital role in legacy waste clean-up and environmental justice initiatives. You witnessed this firsthand when you toured the USS Lead site in East Chicago, Indiana. EPA Region 5 also maintains staff in each state so that it can quickly respond to chemical spills and other emergencies, like last week's hexavalent chromium spill at a U.S. Steel Corporation site in Indiana and the 2010 Enbridge oil spill in the Kalamazoo River. Without EPA Region 5's presence in the area, timely action would have been significantly less likely and these spills could have done more damage to the environment and surrounding communities.

While shutting down EPA's Region 5 Chicago office would make it more difficult and less efficient for the federal government to work in partnership with state and local communities in our region, it is unclear that it would reduce costs to EPA as a whole. Region 5 does not duplicate enforcement or regulatory actions, rather Region 5 allows the EPA to better coordinate federal efforts with state and local governments. In fact, state environmental agencies often rely on EPA Region 5 experts for technical assistance and financial support. More than half of EPA's budget is sent directly to states to aid in clean-up and other environmental programs.

Closing EPA's Region 5 office would have a devastating effect on those that call Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Minnesota, and Ohio home. Therefore, we urge you to protect the environmental health and well-being of our states by keeping Region 5 intact and fully supporting its critical mission.

Sincerely,


RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator


MARCY KAPTUR
Member of Congress


DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator


MIKE QUIGLEY
Member of Congress


AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator


TIM RYAN
Member of Congress



TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senator



GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress



GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator



BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER
Member of Congress




AL FRANKEN
United States Senator



BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress



JOE DONNELLY
United States Senator



BETTY McCOLLUM
Member of Congress



TAMMY BALDWIN
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DEBBIE DINGELL
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ROB PORTMAN
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BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress



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JOHN CONYERS, JR.
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CHERI BUSTOS
Member of Congress



KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress



DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress



RON KIND
Member of Congress

Cc: Robert Kaplan, Acting Regional Administrator for Environmental Protection Agency
Region 5