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## Trumpery, Codswallop, and this Administration's Real Environmental Record

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Earlier this month President Trump, surrounded by multiple Cabinet members, presented his administration's [environmental “accomplishments”](#) in a speech to the nation. As noted by many fact-checkers, the president and his Cabinet made statements that were a series of [half-truths](#), [cherry-picked data](#), and [outright fabrications](#).

One of my favorite words is “codswallop,” meaning nonsense. And a great synonym for codswallop is “trumpery.” I couldn't have coined a better word myself to describe this ludicrous series of statements.

It is not insignificant that there were so many cabinet members in the room, including three who spoke (Interior Secretary Bernhardt, Energy Secretary Perry, EPA Administrator Wheeler, plus Mary Neumayr, director of CEQ). It is not clear

why the other secretaries—Mnuchin, Azar, Chao, and Ross—were there. Maybe it was a slow day at Treasury, Labor, Transportation and Commerce. Or maybe it was just a way to stay out of the torrential rain that flooded DC that day.

Environmental action is too often pejoratively called “tree hugging,” when the reality is that it isn’t about that at all—it is truly about public health and safety. Protecting us from the health impacts of polluted air, water, soil, and oceans. Preserving natural systems to provide the critical services we need as a society (e.g. filtering water, buffering storms, sequestering carbon, providing food and recreation). And the loss of these “environmental” protections falls most heavily on the most vulnerable among us—the elderly, children, the poor, and communities of color.

Yes, this is a vital role of government—safeguarding our people. My colleagues at the Union of Concerned Scientists have written on many of the issues we are confronting where real federal government leadership, not Trumpery, is needed. The links below take you to a subsample:

## Climate change

Trump’s speech falsely claimed the US federal government is [leading the battle](#) against climate change and its impacts. As recent Congressional hearings have shown, this is [far from the case](#). And the consequences are dire for our [economy](#), our [security](#), and [human health](#). To make real progress, we need to heed the [international scientific advice on climate change](#), aggressively pursue [carbon sequestration policies](#), and reverse the [administration’s actions](#) on [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

We need our government in both branches to enact national standards to make the [transition to low-carbon energy](#). Some states, like [Maine](#), are leading the way, but we need the federal government to [get with the program](#). And we need to recognize and act upon the fact that [energy poverty](#) afflicts poor Americans with

a heavy burden. We have [many of the tools](#) to change our energy system if our leaders will only help get us there.

Some members of Congress have stepped up, with innovative proposals for a [Green New Deal](#) (which bears no resemblance to Trump's description of it). This is a real opportunity to address climate change, environmental justice, and economic growth, if only our leaders can push ahead, not backward.

## Transportation

Cars and trucks are a huge source of greenhouse gas emissions and [pollution](#). It is clear that the brunt of that pollution falls on [poor communities](#) and [communities of color](#). Even as Transportation Secretary Chao and WPA Administrator Wheeler are trying to [roll back](#) fuel economy rules, [Congress](#) is [pushing back](#).

The [future of transportation is electric](#) as our electricity system moves to zero carbon. [Freight transport](#) is a big part of this picture, and again, the [tools are available](#) if our leaders would only aggressively lead the changes we need.

## Air pollution

[Air pollution kills](#). Trump and Wheeler were right when they said that we have made enormous progress as a country in reducing air pollution since the 1970s. That was accomplished by strong legislation, good regulations, and efforts to enforce the rules. What they left out was that this administration is [working hard to dismantle](#) many Clean Air Act protections by [rolling back rules](#) and [sidelining science](#). Overall, [Administrator Wheeler](#) and his team seem to want to move the agency backward, not forward.

Because we have worked so long and so hard as a nation to reduce air pollution, we know what needs to be done if we had leaders who would step up to the problem, not deny it. Tightening [standards](#) based on [science](#), evaluating regulations based on [benefits to the public](#) and not just costs, addressing ongoing

issues such as [cross-state pollution](#), and [monitoring](#) and [enforcing](#) the rules rigorously. Congress needs to step up and insist upon [rigorous implementation](#) of the Clean Air Act and other laws. And our agency leaders need to take the public interest as their mission, not [industry convenience](#).

## Other pollution issues

While the President and Administrator Wheeler touted their work on Superfund site clean-up, the reality is rather different. Even the shining [examples](#) the President listed—[West Lake landfill in St. Louis](#) and the Kalamazoo River papermill in Michigan—are not completed, nor will they be in the near future. In addition to [rampant conflicts of interest](#), the Trump Administration has dramatically cut the budget for the Superfund program and reduced enforcement and accountability for industry, and the Superfund office has been hemorrhaging staff under Wheeler. And ignoring [the impacts of climate change](#) on Superfund sites adds to the mess.

What is really needed is a reinvestment in Superfund itself, a renewed effort to hold polluters accountable for legacy toxic waste, and [prioritizing](#) overburdened, vulnerable communities. And planning for the severe weather events and other impacts that climate change is bringing.

Similarly, on [water pollution](#), [chemical safety](#), and [toxic substances](#), Congress has pushed forward, but the administration has sidestepped the law. Congress needs to hold their feet to the fire and make sure real progress is made on these critical [public health issues](#).

## Federal science and scientists

Real leadership to protect the public interest and public health and safety would ensure that our [federal scientists](#) continue to be at the top of their fields, their [advice is valued and critical to policy decisions](#), and that [political interference](#)



that censors science is stopped in its tracks. That's not the record of this administration. Simply put, you cannot serve the public unless the [professionals](#) in our federal agencies are supported and listened to, young talent is joining public service, and policies are shaped with the best information possible.

## We need real environmental leadership in the federal government

All the Trumpery aside, we as a country clearly have a long way to go on a wide range of public health and environmental issues. We need to move forward and address the many challenges we face, new and old. The Trump Administration's approach is seemingly predicated on the false assumption that we have no more public health and safety challenges to address and it is time to take a step back. They couldn't be more wrong.

Reinvigorating our democracy means reinvigorating the approach the federal government takes to serving the public interest—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To do that will take real leadership, not Trumpery. My colleagues and I will keep writing about what this administration is doing. We will also continue to write about what needs to be done. And when we do, we will call upon the American public to raise their voices—tell this administration that backtracking on public health and safety will not stand. Call on Congress to exercise their constitutional duty to oversee and as needed push back on the Executive branch. You are the constituents they are duty bound to serve, so speak up! Contact our federal agencies, submit formal comments on proposed actions, reach out to your elected representatives. [We can help alert you to what is happening](#), but democracy is not a spectator activity. Democracy is a verb—something we all must do, not watch while shaking our heads.

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