



Senator Duckworth introduces legislation to prevent EPA region office closures

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), the senior-most Democrat on the Senate Subcommittee tasked with ensuring access to clean drinking water and helping prevent lead poisoning, today introduced a new bill to prevent the closure of any regional Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) office and protect thousands of jobs across the country. Her legislation, the *Recognizing the Environmental Gains in Overcoming Negligence* (REGION) Act, was introduced following reports that President Trump’s budget proposal would gut the EPA and force several regional offices to shutter, including the Region 5 office in Chicago where 1,000 dedicated employees work tirelessly to protect our environment and the health and safety of Americans living in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

“The EPA’s regional offices—and their thousands of hardworking public servants—are critical when it comes to improving public health and safeguarding the environment,” said Duckworth. **“Shuttering them and slashing EPA resources would jeopardize the livelihood and safety of communities in Illinois and across the country. I’m introducing my new REGION Act to protect Illinois jobs and ensure these offices can remain open to provide the protections we rely on—whether or not the President thinks protecting our children from lead poisoning and toxic air is important.”**

Duckworth’s *REGION Act* is cosponsored by Senator Tom Carper (D-DE) and Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT). Citing lessons learned from the Flint water crisis, Duckworth led several colleagues in [writing](#) to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in early May urging Pruitt to commit that none of the agency’s regional offices be closed or consolidated. During Pruitt’s confirmation hearing, Duckworth pressed the nominee on the importance of

these regional offices as well as the importance of appointing a permanent leader to head the EPA Region 5. Duckworth also got Pruitt to agree about the need to empower the dedicated men and women who serve in EPA Region 5 in the aftermath of Flint, Michigan, to act proactively when a state fails to protect its citizens.

“I was deeply concerned by the reports that the Administration planned to abolish EPA regional offices,” said Durbin. “Especially for Illinoisans and the six Great Lakes states that the EPA Region 5 office serves, that office is critical to protecting the air, drinking water, and health of its residents. Closing its headquarters in Chicago would make EPA less effective and efficient in its efforts to protect the environment and human health. I’m proud to support Senator Duckworth in introducing this vital bill and will continue to work with my colleagues to protect EPA regional offices across the country.”

“The men and women at EPA’s regional offices are the front lines of environmental protection,” said Senator Carper, the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee and co-sponsor of the REGION Act. “They live, work and raise their families in the communities they protect and are vital resources for building and maintaining strong partnerships with state and local officials. I thank Senator Duckworth for her continued leadership on the Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife Subcommittee and for introducing this important legislation to ensure EPA’s regional offices can continue their indispensable environmental work across the country.”

Duckworth is a member of the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee and the Ranking Member of its Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water and Wildlife. The EPA’s regional offices enforce Federal pollution standards, inspect local facilities and serve as a resource for state environmental entities. The Senator met with EPA Region 5 staffers in Chicago earlier this year to discuss the critical work they do to protect the health and safety of Americans living in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

The EPA Region 5 Office is home to the Great Lakes Program Office that executes our international obligations with Canada under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. In addition, it leads the nation’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), which has funded over 2,000 projects that improve water quality, protect wildlife, and clean up toxic pollutants that threaten our water supply since 2010. To date, the program invested more than \$2.2 billion in Great Lakes restoration projects. Coordinated in both the United States and Canada, GLRI sets the standard for interagency and international cooperation. A 2008 Brookings Institution report shows that every \$1 invested in Great

Lakes restoration results in a \$2 return in the form of increased fishing, tourism and home values. The Great Lakes contain 95 percent of America's fresh surface water and supply drinking water to more than 30 million people in North America.