

Durbin Leads Colleagues In Calling On Biden Administration To Increase Funding For Epa Enforcement And Compliance Programs

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today led eight of his Senate colleagues in sending a letter to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Shalanda Young, as well as U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael Regan, expressing his support for increased federal funding for enforcement and compliance staffing and activity at EPA in the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget request.

“The request should continue to support funding that would increase and prioritize enforcement and compliance activities in communities of color and low-income areas. Specifically, we urge you to request funding for at least 400 additional full-time equivalents and provide a real increase, adjusted for inflation, across enforcement and compliance programs,” the Senators wrote.

The Senators went on to emphasize the positive impacts of enforcement and compliance programs, which deter environmental law violations, protect environmental quality and public health, and mandate remediation of harmful environmental hazards. While these programs have shown positive results, there was a dramatic decrease in accountability measures led by EPA between FY18 and FY21 because of inadequate funding. The Senators urged OMB and EPA to ensure appropriate funding to maintain and expand enforcement and compliance programs.

“Environmental laws such as the *Clean Air Act* and *Clean Water Act* protect public and environmental health and are enforced by monitoring regulated entities and holding those in noncompliance accountable. These efforts result in significant community benefits through the reduction and remediation of pollution and the protection of important natural resources,” the Senators wrote.

“Yet, during Fiscal Years 2018 through 2021, EPA enforcement fell by nearly half from historic levels across a host of activities: inspections, criminal investigations, civil and criminal prosecutions, defendants charged, civil penalties, criminal fines, and cleanup costs paid by polluters,” the Senators continued. “Without adequate enforcement and compliance resources, the agency may be limited in its ability to return to full capacity or increase its presence in environmental justice communities.”

The Senators concluded their letter by reiterating that EPA needs robust funding to carry out its mission to protect communities from further pollution and to account for climate crisis-driven environmental disasters, which disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income areas.

“We appreciate that the Administration is working to reduce pollution and noncompliance from regulated entities. Unfortunately, reports indicate compliance is far from universal and serious environmental violations continue to be widespread... Noncompliance and reduced enforcement activity can exacerbate environmental harms from these events, particularly in communities of color and low-income areas. It is critically important that we deliver the resources necessary for EPA to carry out its mission,” the Senators concluded.

Joining Durbin in sending this letter were U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI),

Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Jack Reed (D-RI), and Tom Carper (D-DE).

Full text of the letter is available [here](#).