



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

July 7, 2020

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The Honorable John A. Yarmuth
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, I am writing in response to your letter dated June 29, 2020, to Administrator Andrew Wheeler regarding a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) inquiry about EPA's approach to funding of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Agency takes seriously the responsibilities enumerated in the Impoundment Control Act and our responsibility to appropriately cooperate with inquiries and investigations by GAO.

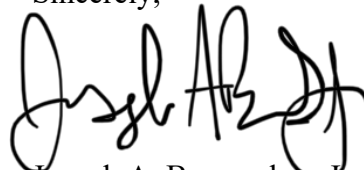
EPA will follow the long-standing Executive Branch policy of complying with Congress' legitimate oversight requests to the fullest extent consistent with the constitutional and statutory interests of the Executive Branch. These interests include the need to protect Executive Branch confidentiality, when such confidentiality is necessary to the proper functioning of the Executive, and to preserve the appropriate separation of powers between the Executive and Legislative Branches of the federal government. In implementing this policy, the Executive Branch engages in good faith negotiation with Congressional committees and GAO so that it can accommodate legitimate oversight needs, while also safeguarding the legitimate confidentiality interests of the Executive Branch.

It is troubling that the Committee would publicly allege, with no evidence, "that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) may improperly seek to interfere with" and "obstruct" EPA's cooperation with GAO on this or any other engagement. Conversely, it is the Committee which seems to be interfering with the public's trust in proper government administration by falsely alleging a "history of obstruction" where none exists, and then applying this presupposition to the GAO's engagement with EPA. The Committees' narrative on this GAO engagement is an attempt to make it appear like "pressure" is being put on EPA "to violate its legal obligations and breach the public trust." These allegations are baseless and not an accurate reflection of any interagency cooperation in appropriately responding to Congress.

EPA will continue to act consistent with our legal obligations and interact with Congress in a manner that will ensure the public's trust, as we have throughout this Administration. EPA takes each GAO engagement seriously, and we continue to be responsive to GAO and Congressional requests. It has long been the policy of the Agency, in both Republican and Democrat Administrations, to properly utilize the accommodations process. In this respect, EPA intends for our interactions with GAO to be no different. We fully intend to cooperate appropriately with GAO on all inquiries, including this one related to EPA's approach to funding of the WHO.

The EPA recognizes the importance of the Committee's need to obtain information necessary to perform its legitimate oversight functions and is committed to continuing to work with GAO and your staff on how best to accommodate the Committee's interests. If you have further questions, you may contact me, or your staff may contact Garrett Kral in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at Kral.Garrett@epa.gov or (202) 564-9114.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph A. Brazauskas, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Joseph A. Brazauskas, Jr.
Associate Administrator

cc: The Honorable Steve Womack, Ranking Republican