

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2025

Lee Zeldin
Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

We write to express alarm regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) plan to eliminate its Office of Research and Development (ORD)—a blatant assault on science, public health, and the agency's core mission. This reckless decision would erode the agency's scientific foundation to the benefit of polluting industries at the expense of working-class communities and exacerbate climate change. It is a betrayal of EPA's obligation to the American people to understand and use the best available science and a violation of the law.

For decades, ORD has been the backbone of independent, science-based policymaking at EPA. Its groundbreaking research has helped curb air and water pollution, regulate toxic chemicals, and protect communities from industrial waste. By dismantling ORD, you would gut the agency's ability to conduct independent research and hand over environmental policy to industry insiders. This proposal is not about efficiency or improvement—it is a deliberate effort to strip away regulatory safeguards that protect ordinary Americans while boosting profits for the wealthiest polluters.

Reports detail EPA's intent to dismantle ORD and terminate more than 1,000 critical positions including chemists, toxicologists, and biologists. This "reduction in force" follows a pattern of politically motivated purges, where public servants reinstated by court order remain sidelined while allegiance to the president and his fossil fuel benefactors, not expertise, determines who stays and who goes. To state the obvious, EPA is required to conduct research and develop the best available knowledge to support implementation of its regulatory authority.

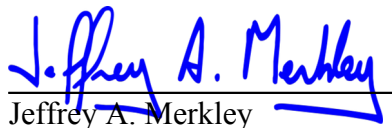
Your actions will have devastating consequences. They will weaken scientific oversight, eliminate critical regulatory safeguards, and give polluting industries unchecked influence over environmental policy and ultimately human health. Stripping EPA of its independent research capacity would transform the agency into a rubber stamp for corporate interests rather than a protector of public health and the environment. Eliminating ORD does not create jobs, does not promote economic growth, and does not serve the American people—it endangers public health and the environment.

Over just the past decade alone, EPA researchers have produced ground-breaking research on cancer-causing chemicals (such as Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and Glyphosate), diesel engine exhaust that exacerbates asthma and is linked to lung-disease, Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) forever chemicals in our drinking water, and in-utero exposure to phthalates. ORD also provides critical support in response to disasters. For example, ORD developed tools for monitoring SARS-CoV-2 levels in wastewater to assess community infection rates, assessed damage to human and marine health after the April 2010 explosion and collapse of the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico, and studied the conditions of coastal waters and drinking water infrastructure following Hurricane Katrina.

Moreover, if implemented, this proposal would violate federal law. ORD is recognized as EPA's research organization in law throughout the United States Code (see 7 U.S.C. 4921, 15 U.S.C. 8962, 42 U.S.C. 4361c, among other examples). Further, the fiscal year 2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act appropriates \$758.1 million for the EPA's research initiatives through the Science and Technology Account. Unilaterally dismantling ORD and impounding funds appropriated for science and technology contravenes the statute and appropriations and undermines Congress's constitutional authority over federal expenditures.

We strongly urge you to immediately reverse course and abandon this dangerous plan. The integrity of the EPA's scientific research must be preserved to ensure sound policymaking and the continued protection of public health and the environment. The American people will not stand by while their air, water, and communities are sacrificed for the profits of a few.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Department
of the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related
Agencies