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Oversight of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice Grants: U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Accountability Letter to Administrator Regan

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The United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Accountability (“Committee”) transmitted a February 27th letter to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) Administrator Michael S. Regan.

The letter states that the Committee is conducting oversight of EPA’s administration of environmental justice (“EJ”) grants.

The letter is signed by the Chairman of the Committee, Congressman James Comer, and the Chairman of the Committee’s Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs, Congressman Pat Fallon.

The term “environmental justice” is defined by EPA as:

. . . the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

The federal agency has previously articulated a goal that includes everyone enjoying:

. . . the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

The February 27th Committee letter references EPA’s publishing two Requests for Applications on January 10, 2023. They are described as constituting approximately \$100 million in grant funding to support EJ initiatives.

Concern is expressed that:

. . . despite this “unprecedented level of funding,” the EPA’s own case studies for EJ grant programs demonstrate weak standards for grantees to practically address environmental concerns.

As a result, the Committee states that it is attempting to better understand the applications and disbursements of EJ grants, which includes those incorporated in the \$60 billion allocated to EJ initiatives under the inflation Reduction Act.

The Committee letter references:

- \$30 million designated to the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Program
- \$70 million allocated through the Environmental Justice Government-to-Government Program

The Committee states that the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Program determined that grantees:

. . . failed to clearly define health or environmental concerns, articulate intended results, identify causes, and continued to engage in activities that “may not be effective” and did “not logically lead to the desired environmental and/or public health [result].

Concern is also expressed regarding:

- Absence of oversight mechanisms
- Absence of adequate metrics for applicants
- Volume of money flowing calls into question EPA’s ability to properly manage it

The February 27th letter requests a number of documents and certain information covering the time period January 20 of 2021 to the present. The information is requested as soon as possible but no later than March 13, 2023.

A copy of the letter can be downloaded [here](#).