EPA News Highlights 4.4.18

[HYPERLINK \l "_Breitbart"]
The Environmental Protection Agency on Monday took the Obama fuel economy rules off autopilot. This is good news for consumers, automakers and the U.S. economy, but the Trump Administration's big test will be negotiating around the political potholes. Corporate average fuel economy (Cafe) standards are a vestige of the 1970s gas shortages. Like the Nixon-era price controls, the fuel standards were intended to reduce gas consumption. But the environmental left long ago hijacked the rules to impose their vision of an electric-car future. In 2012 the Obama EPA turned up the Cafe dial and mandated a fleetwide average of 54.5 miles a gallon by 2025 with a midpoint review in 2017. After President Trump won the election, Obama EPA chief Gina McCarthy blazed through the review and upheld the 2012 targets no matter the economic and technological obstacles.

[HYPERLINK \l "_The_Federalist"]
After Donald Trump, the individual in DC with the biggest target on his back is Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt. When he was attorney general of Oklahoma, he sued the EPA more than a dozen times to get the powerful regulatory agency to stay within its legal authority. His nomination was deeply concerning to radical environmentalists inside and outside the media. As a result, he and his team have been under a microscope since even before his confirmation in early 2017. Well-funded environmental groups, many with former EPA staffers, deluge the agency with FOIA requests to catch someone in a scandal. Unlike how they covered Obama-era EPA administrators, media outlets constantly request information about everything Pruitt does, from his schedule to his travel particulars. Whipped-up partisans have made unprecedented numbers of death threats against him and his family. Powerful liberals opine against him.

[HYPERLINK \l "_The_Hill_1"]
President Donald Trump is standing by his embattled Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt, according to reports. Let's be clear, that is good thing for both Trump and the country. Pruitt is one of the shining stars of the Trump administration, and no one who supports the president's "Make America Great Again" agenda should want him replaced. Current complaints about Pruitt's Washington, D.C., condo, rented at the fair-market value from a lobbyist, are mostly politically motivated. As the designated agency ethics official for the EPA explained: "Entering into the lease was consistent with federal ethics regulations regarding gifts, and use of the property in accordance with the lease agreement did not constitute a gift as defined in those regulations." Yet some hope that by attacking Pruitt on fake ethics charges, the media-created scandal will cause the Trump White House to either foolishly force Pruitt out or cause him to throw up his hands in disgust and resign. This would be a disaster for President Trump and all of us who care about his success.

[HYPERLINK \l "_The_Resurgent"]
Scott Pruitt is being targeted because he is effective. The President needs to stand behind Pruitt. It is an open secret in Washington that a leftwing opposition research firm has hired investigators to dig into Trump Administration officials. It is no coincidence that many of the accusations, like with former Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price, involve private air travel and the like. It is what these investigators focus on to give the media easy stories.

[HYPERLINK \l "_The_Washington_Examiner_1"]
EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on Tuesday forcefully pushed back against criticism that he won a short-term sweetheart rental deal from a lobbyist friend, claiming it's just the latest attempt by his and the president's attackers to "resort to anything" to stop their agenda. "There are people that have long in this town done business a different way and this agency has been the poster child of it. And so do I think that because we are leading on this agenda that there are some who want to keep that from happening? Absolutely. And do I think that they will resort to anything to achieve that? Yes," he said in an interview with Secrets. "It's toxic here in that regard," said Pruitt, one of a handful of President's Trump's agency heads who is scoring wins on his pro-jobs, anti-regulatory campaign. Pruitt, speaking confidently about his future, said that critics who have focused on his $50 a night room rental in an Airbnb-style townhouse and his air

travel are really out to stop the administration's anti-regulatory effort that has saved $8 billion overall and $1 billion in reduced Environmental Protection Agency regulations.

[HYPERLINK \l "_CNN"]
Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt is drawing scrutiny for his housing situation and travel practices, but in his role as the nation's top environmental official, he's a reliable administration foot soldier, making good on President Donald Trump's campaign promises for fewer environmental regulations and to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement. Since he was confirmed to the job last February, Pruitt has taken an aggressive approach to rolling back Obama-era regulations, most recently this week's announcement that he would revise fuel efficiency rules designed to cut back on emissions of greenhouse gases. "This is another step in the President's regulatory agenda, de-regulatory agenda ... a billion dollars in savings with respect to over 22 significant regulatory actions that we've been involved in here at the agency," Pruitt said at EPA headquarters Tuesday.

[HYPERLINK \l "_Fox_News"]
Conservatives are supporting U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt as he struggles with reports of premium travel, high-price security and ties to lobbyists. Myron Ebell, who led President Trump's EPA transition team, told E&E News that Pruitt has been consequential in achieving the president's goals. Pruitt has proposed repealing several Obama-era regulations, winning plaudits from free-market and business groups that have long battled with EPA. "We're getting the word out that Administrator Pruitt is doing a good job in implementing the president's agenda and Administrator Pruitt is a key part of that agenda," Ebell said. "We're trying to keep the free-market groups and the conservative groups together in support of the agenda." Ebell, director of the Competitive Enterprise Institute's Center for Energy and Environment, talked to E&E News on his way to EPA headquarters today to attend Pruitt's announcement of the rollback of Obama-era auto fuel efficiency standards. Ebell declined to speculate whether Pruitt's job is in jeopardy.

[HYPERLINK \l "_Fox_News"]
Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt laid out plans on Tuesday to roll back Obama-era fuel standards in a move seen as a win for automakers, but one that is likely to ignite a major political and legal battle with the nation's most populous state. "These standards that were set were inappropriate and need to be revised," Pruitt said during a speech at the EPA in Washington D.C., adding that the rules are too expensive and hurt car buyers by making vehicles costlier. "The focus should be on making cars that people actually buy and that are efficient," he said. Pruitt's decision to rewrite the nation's first carbon limits on automobiles, which requires cars and light trucks sold in the United States to average more than 50 miles per gallon by 2025, reflects both the power of the country's automakers and the Trump administration's determination to jump start the car industry.

National News Highlights 4.4.18

[HYPERLINK \l "_NBC_News"]
The NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit has confirmed the identity of the shooter who opened fire on YouTube's campus in San Bruno Tuesday. Nasim Aghdam, 39, lived in Southern California and appears to have had a robust presence on YouTube. In a video posted in January 2017, she says YouTube "discriminated and filtered" her content. In the video, Aghdam says her channel used to get lots of views but that after being "filtered" by the company, it received far fewer views. In one online rant, she complained that YouTube censored her content by imposing an age restriction on one of her workout videos because they were too racy. She says the company failed to do the same thing for stars like Miley Cyrus and Nicki Minaj, whose videos, she says, are inappropriate for children. In a Facebook post from February 2017, Aghdam blasted YouTube saying, "There is no equal growth opportunity on YouTube."

[HYPERLINK \l "_CNBC"]
China announced additional tariffs on 106 U.S. products on Wednesday, in a move likely to heighten global concerns of a tit-for-tat trade war between the world's biggest economies. The effective start date for the new charges was not announced, though China's Ministry of Commerce said the tariffs are designed to target up to $50 billion of U.S. products annually. The 25 percent levy on U.S. imports includes products such as soybeans, cars and whiskey, Beijing

said. The full list can be found here. The move comes less than 24 hours after President Donald Trump unveiled a list of Chinese imports that he aims to target as part of a crackdown on what he deems as unfair trade practices.

[HYPERLINK \l "_TRUMP_TWEETS_9"]

The Wall Street Journal

[HYPERLINK "https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-fuel-economy-fraud-1522795202"]

The Fuel Economy Fraud

By The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board, 4/3/18

The Environmental Protection Agency on Monday took the Obama fuel economy rules off autopilot. This is good news for consumers, automakers and the U.S. economy, but the Trump Administration's big test will be negotiating around the political potholes.

Corporate average fuel economy (Cafe) standards are a vestige of the 1970s gas shortages. Like the Nixon-era price controls, the fuel standards were intended to reduce gas consumption. But the environmental left long ago hijacked the rules to impose their vision of an electric-car future.

In 2012 the Obama EPA turned up the Cafe dial and mandated a fleetwide average of 54.5 miles a gallon by 2025 with a midpoint review in 2017. After President Trump won the election, Obama EPA chief Gina McCarthy blazed through the review and upheld the 2012 targets no matter the economic and technological obstacles.

Passenger cars were about half of U.S. vehicle sales in 2012 when gas averaged $3.60 a gallon. But last year they made up only about a third of the fleet mix, and their share has been declining amid lower gas prices. This will make it nearly impossible to hit future targets even with cleaner technologies. By the Obama EPA's own projections, fewer than 1% of gas-burning vehicles would meet its 2022 target.

Many automakers have met EPA's targets so far by selling small and electric cars at a loss, and some have shifted production to lower-cost Mexico. Fiat Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne has estimated that his company loses $14,000 on each Fiat 500e.

But in 2016 for the first time most manufacturers complied with the standards by using regulatory credits that the EPA provides for efficient air-conditioning systems, electric cars and flex-fuel vehicles that can run on ethanol. These green indulgences can be stored and traded. During the 2016 model year, Fiat Chrysler bought 21.9 million credits. Honda sold 20.7 million. The credit scheme is an income transfer that has SUV and truck consumers indirectly subsidizing electric and small cars—which typically means rural and suburban residents subsidizing city dwellers. This subsidy would grow as the targets rise.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt last year put the brakes on the Obama rules for the 2022-2025 model years and will now initiate a formal rule-making to revise the targets. Consumers should be allowed to buy the cars they want regardless of gas mileage. But if that's politically infeasible, Mr. Pruitt should aim to fix Cafe's biggest problems.

While U.S. automakers have wanted a review, they've been cagey about endorsing lower targets. "We support increasing clean car standards through 2025 and are not asking for a rollback" but merely "additional flexibility," Ford Chairman Bill Ford and CEO Jim Hackett wrote on Medium last month.

Manufacturers have floated alternatives like not accounting for the carbon emissions generated in fueling electric cars. But battery-powered cars aren't a carbon-free lunch since fossil fuels account for 63% of U.S. electric generation. Others ideas include awarding more credits for electric cars and other politically favored technologies. But credits distort business decision-making and raise costs.

Credits do allow manufacturers and regulators to signal their green virtue, however, and car makers don't want to get on the wrong side of the politics. They may also figure that a future Democratic Administration would ratchet the targets back up. But the existing standards are a fraud that deserves to be exposed.

Mr. Pruitt's other challenge is California. The 1970 Clean Air Act prohibits states from adopting their own auto-emissions rules. But amid oppressive smog in the 1960s, California was allowed to request a waiver. The Obama EPA granted California a waiver in 2009, but then imposed stringent rules that were adopted by the Golden State. Mr. Pruitt says he wants to maintain one national standard. Under the law, Mr. Pruitt cannot reject the waiver unless he can demonstrate that California "does not need such standards to meet compelling and extraordinary conditions."

This will require some legal and scientific finesse, but one important point is that carbon emissions don't contribute to smog and were not considered a pollutant until the Supreme Court's Massachusetts v. EPA (2007) decision. California's earlier waivers for tailpipe pollutants like NOx were granted because its smog was worse than in the rest of the country. That's not true of its carbon emissions. In any case, Congress never intended California to use the waiver to usurp federal regulatory control as it has done with its electric-car mandate, which nine other states have adopted.

California's rules won't even make a dent in global carbon emissions, though they erode Congress's authority to regulate interstate commerce. Mr. Pruitt's revision of emissions standards won't help consumers or automakers nearly as much if California can impose its own.

The Federalist

[HYPERLINK "http://thefederalist.com/2018/04/04/scott-pruitt-is-trumps-biggest-asset-thats-why-the-left-wants-him-gone/"]

Scott Pruitt Is Trump's Biggest Asset. That's Why The Left Wants Him Gone

By Mollie Hemingway, 4/4/18

After Donald Trump, the individual in DC with the biggest target on his back is Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt. When he was attorney general of Oklahoma, he sued the EPA more than a dozen times to get the powerful regulatory agency to stay within its legal authority. His nomination was deeply concerning to radical environmentalists inside and outside the media. As a result, he and his team have been under a microscope since even before his confirmation in early 2017.

Well-funded environmental groups, many with former EPA staffers, deluge the agency with FOIA requests to catch someone in a scandal. Unlike how they covered Obama-era EPA administrators, media outlets constantly request information about everything Pruitt does, from his schedule to his travel particulars. Whipped-up partisans have made unprecedented numbers of death threats against him and his family. Powerful liberals opine against him.

Some suggest the death threats are understandable. Liberal Republican governors of New Jersey despise the man. Thomas Kean was calling on him to resign a year ago. Christine Todd Whitman gave inappropriately unserious comments about the death threats. Chris Christie did George Stephanopolous' bidding by trying to throw Pruitt under the bus this past weekend. Maybe there is something in the water of Jersey.

The Weekly Standard's Bill Kristol, who this week tweeted his desire for Michelle Obama to run and defeat Donald Trump, said Pruitt was a parody of sycophancy for supporting a conservative deregulatory agenda. He also thrice tweeted his excitement over the possibility of leftists ousting Pruitt. Fellow NeverTrump enthusiast and Washington Post in-house conservative (really!) Jennifer Rubin also expressed giddiness about him possibly being fired.

And John Podesta — yes, the chair of Hillary Clinton's campaign — was given valuable Washington Post editorial space to say Pruitt must go. Paul Waldman also stomped his feet and demanded Pruitt must resign, mostly for the crime of doing "the most harm to the United States of America" being effective.

But unlike so many Republican politicians in the world today, Pruitt has not been deterred. He worked to scrap Obama administration regulations that exceeded EPA authority and harmed the coal industry. He rescinded confusing and contradictory water rules that hurt farmers and ranchers. He shepherded the U.S. departure from the uneven and horribly negotiated Paris climate accord. He is demanding scientific rigor for agency work.

Pruitt is not some anti-environmentalist but someone who wants the EPA to do what Congress charges it with doing to improve the nation's environment. So he awarded $100 million to upgrade drinking water in Flint, Michigan, and began an effort to eradicate lead poisoning from drinking water. He committed additional funds to deal with the EPA's botching of the Gold King Mine release that polluted Colorado and Utah.

There are poor ways, average ways, and shrewd ways to tackle the constitutional problems that arise from the administrative state. Many Republicans either don't realize the problems of an unelected bureaucracy's power, or fail to combat those problems effectively. Pruitt is in the final category, demonstrating competency and a devotion to rule of law. And he has the courage that so many of his GOP peers lack, not being intimidated by the normal media frenzy that intimidates other Republican appointees.

Recently, a coordinated attempt to oust him has taken shape, as this liberal TV producer notes:

The Washington Post sent out an edition of an email newsletter that nicely summed up the coordinated hit on Pruitt. He rented a room that critics say created an appearance of conflict because he got a good rate and the husband of the woman he rented from heads a law firm that does some lobbying. He was approved for the room by an 18-year career ethics person at EPA, but liberal Pruitt opponents are "concerned." The general rental space also was used by three members of Congress for fundraising on days Pruitt was in town. He wasn't invited to the events, didn't attend them, and even if he had no ethics laws would have been violated, but liberal Pruitt opponents are "concerned."

Supposedly few people in the White House are coming to Pruitt's defense, particularly if you don't count the president and his chief of staff, who made calls of support to him. Oh, also, EPA officials considered leasing a private jet for Pruitt to accommodate his travel and security needs but didn't do it. Yes, that's really one of the stories.

Also, Pruitt "bypassed" the White House to get raises for two of his top aides who came to DC from Oklahoma. Pruitt didn't get White House approval to sign off on the pay raises, but EPA officials used an authority that other EPA administrators used to set pay. Pruitt said he wasn't aware that the actions hadn't been submitted for White House approval, so he directed his staff to do that.

Other recent supposed scandals include that his security team had him flying first class because of the death threats and other physical security threats. The real reason for the media/resistance/establishment chatter about ousting Pruitt, however, is that Pruitt tackles the abuse of the rule of law at EPA head on and has been effective at advancing a conservative deregulatory agenda.

Just this week the EPA announced a rollback of Obama fuel efficiency standards that were part of the Paris arrangement, were set too high, short-circuited the regulatory process, and were favoring pick-ups and SUVs over the automobiles hit with the standards. In a statement, Pruitt said, "Obama's EPA cut the midterm evaluation process short with politically charged expediency, made assumptions about the standards that didn't comport with reality and set the standards too high." California is already suing to block the rollback.

A Sudden, Disparate Interest

The media and activists didn't treat Obama's EPA secretary, Lisa Jackson, with any rigor, despite her demonstrable corrutpion. She used the alias "Richard Windsor" to correspond secretly with people outside of the EPA, including with environmental activists and the man who would lead the White House's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. When this same woman criticized the Trump administration for lack of transparency, almost nobody in the media

pointed out how ludicrous a messenger she was. She's now a VP at Apple. When the EPA broke laws, only conservative media showed any interest.

It's not that there was no media coverage of the EPA-caused Gold King Mine spill, the EPA-ignored Flint Water Crisis, the EPA administrator misleading Congress, the EPA violating federal propaganda policies, or many other problems under Jackson and her Obama replacement Gina McCarthy, but it was never done with the same bloodthirsty frenzy surrounding Pruitt. Not even a tiny fraction of it.

For many people on the left, EPA regulations touch on quasi-religious views. They treat people like Pruitt as heretics who must be destroyed. That's fine, and expected from the members of the resistance. These Resistance members predict they will succeed in ousting Pruitt. They hate him and want him gone. They recognize that he's not just a problem, but a big problem. That's why we're witnessing the coordinated hits on him.

More details on that double standard here.

If the anti-Pruitt campaign does succeed, it would be a tremendous victory for the left, and one that would embolden them like nothing else. It would also utterly destroy conservative base morale. Conservatives have put up with a lot during the Trump era and much of that can be explained by the actual policy wins. Pruitt is entrenching rule of law in the administrative state and rescinding liberty-crushing regulations that exceed EPA authority. His work getting the United States out of economy-harming regulatory schemes is responsible for much of the economic successes of Trump's first year.

The reasons the media and their Resistance followers hate Pruitt are the same reasons conservatives love him and why conservatives are willing to support Trump. No, the reason is not that he got approval from a career ethics official to rent a room for a few months last year. Let's stop pretending so. If Trump were to fulfill the Resistance's desire to oust Pruitt, it would be against his own political interest. His instincts about that tend to be pretty sharp, so don't be surprised if Pruitt continues to serve and continues to anger the media and other Democrats and establishment figures.

The Hill

[HYPERLINK "http://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/381508-epa-chief-scott-pruitt-gets-results-thats-why-hes-a-target-of-the"]

EPA Chief Scott Pruitt Gets Results — That's Why He's A Target Of The Left

By Rick Manning, 4/3/18

President Donald Trump is standing by his embattled Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt, according to reports. Let's be clear, that is good thing for both Trump and the country. Pruitt is one of the shining stars of the Trump administration, and no one who supports the president's "Make America Great Again" agenda should want him replaced.

Current complaints about Pruitt's Washington, D.C., condo, rented at the fair-market value from a lobbyist, are mostly politically motivated. As the designated agency ethics official for the EPA explained:

"Entering into the lease was consistent with federal ethics regulations regarding gifts, and use of the property in accordance with the lease agreement did not constitute a gift as defined in those regulations."

Yet some hope that by attacking Pruitt on fake ethics charges, the media-created scandal will cause the Trump White House to either foolishly force Pruitt out or cause him to throw up his hands in disgust and resign.
This would be a disaster for President Trump and all of us who care about his success.

EPA Administrator Pruitt has been instrumental in taking on the difficult task of rolling back Obama era regulations and in his first year has already completed 22 deregulatory actions, saving more than a billion dollars in regulatory costs.

Something as benign as Pruitt's recently announced effort to make certain that the methodology of the science the EPA uses to make regulatory determinations is transparent and the results are repeatable, has come under fire from former Obama-era EPA administrators Gina McCarthy and Janet McCabe called it, "his latest effort to cripple the agency."

It would seem that making sure the science behind major economy-shattering regulations is actually accurate and that the data is available for public scrutiny should be standard. Yet, incredibly, Pruitt is having to fight for the sake of establishing sound science that meets the basic criteria of the scientific method in order to restore valid underpinnings for environmental regulations.

Pruitt is even having to re-evaluate the Obama administration's controversial and arbitrary fuel efficiency standard that set a car and light truck fleet average of 50 miles per gallon by 2025, regardless of whether it was technologically possible to achieve it. Effectively, this policy would force auto makers to sell expensive-to-produce electric vehicles to consumers at a loss in order to be able to sell customers the trucks and other gasoline-consuming vehicles that they want at significantly increased prices.

The changes announced by the EPA have left open what the fuel efficiency standards will be, and likely will end the state of California's waiver to federal law allowing the rogue state to compel stricter standards under the Clean Air Act.

President Trump can expect to hear an uproar from states like California and New York over Pruitt's smart decision on Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, but when Administrator Pruitt prevails on this issue, it will help the president achieve his goal of putting the American auto industry back on top. Pruitt is doing the hard work to achieve the Trump agenda and taking the political and personal attacks that are part of battling the environmental industry driving American manufacturing to the breaking point.

We are talking about more than angry letter writing. In fact, Pruitt and his family have been subjected to a significant stream of personal threats. The threats have become so severe that the EPA inspector general, who is tasked with the physical safety of the administrator, now provides 24/7 protection for him and his family.

Incredibly, Pruitt gets zero credit from the left for increasing Superfund clean-up efforts designed to restore polluted sites to usability. He gets zero credit for enforcement actions that resulted in the second highest level of civil and administrative fine collections in the past decade, falling short of only FY 2016 which included a massive BP settlement. He gets zero credit because these critics are less concerned with cleaning up legitimate messes, than strangling the American manufacturing sector today and into the future.

President Donald Trump can and should be proud of his administrator's efforts at the EPA. Scott Pruitt is moving the Trump agenda forward and ensuring that the environment remains protected while our economic engines roar back to life.

Scott Pruitt is excelling at his job, and that is why he is the target of those who want to see the Trump administration fail. The president needs to recognize this and continue to stand by his chief general in the war against the regulatory stranglehold that was left by Obama. To be persuaded to make a personnel change at the EPA would be a disastrous mistake for his policy agenda. Most importantly, it would be a bad, bad decision for America's future.

The Resurgent

[HYPERLINK "https://www.themaven.net/theresurgent/erick-erickson/firing-scott-pruitt-will-only-embolden-the-left-98kPgKgnh06CbfWqAwBc9A/"]

Firing Scott Pruitt Will Only Embolden the Left

By Erick Erickson, 4/4/18

Scott Pruitt is being targeted because he is effective. The President needs to stand behind Pruitt.

It is an open secret in Washington that a leftwing opposition research firm has hired investigators to dig into Trump Administration officials. It is no coincidence that many of the accusations, like with former Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price, involve private air travel and the like. It is what these investigators focus on to give the media easy stories.

There really is not much unusual about that and, frankly, given the outrageous hostility of the left and the ongoing, targeted harassment of Trump Administration officials, private air travel makes a ton of sense for the other passengers and the Cabinet level official.

But here we are with Scott Pruitt. The left is out to get him not because he has done anything wrong, but because he is highly effective. Pruitt has not, contrary to media accusations, abused the use of private aviation. Likewise, he is paying a rent that career EPA bureaucrats have determined is "reasonable fair market value." Contrary to press reports, the landlord has no business before the EPA and there is no conflict of interest.

What the press is doing is waging war, as part of the resistance, against President Trump and his highly effective cabinet level personnel. Scott Pruitt has been ruthlessly effective at rolling back EPA regulations, CAFE standards, and the like. As a result, this leftwing opposition research group has dumped its oppo package on reporters, spoon feeding them information into easily digestible stories.

There are kernels of truth. Yes, the EPA Administrator flew on private planes. Yes, the EPA Administrator rents from a lobbyist. The media is playing those up and ignoring that no, the trips were not abusive and no the rent is not a conflict of interest or below fair market value.

If President Trump fires Scott Pruitt, he will embolden the left and have handed them a huge win against one of the most effective members of the Trump Cabinet. Conservatives absolutely need to stand with the Scott Pruitt. President Trump needs to stand with Scott Pruitt.

The Washington Examiner

[HYPERLINK "https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/washington-secrets/scott-pruitt-washington-toxic-critics-trying-stop-trump-agenda"]

Embattled Scott Pruitt Rips 'Toxic' Washington, Says Critics 'Will Resort To Anything' To Stop Trump Agenda

By Paul Bedard, 4/3/18

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt on Tuesday forcefully pushed back against criticism that he won a short-term sweetheart rental deal from a lobbyist friend, claiming it's just the latest attempt by his and the president's attackers to "resort to anything" to stop their agenda.

"There are people that have long in this town done business a different way and this agency has been the poster child of it. And so do I think that because we are leading on this agenda that there are some who want to keep that from happening? Absolutely. And do I think that they will resort to anything to achieve that? Yes," he said in an interview with Secrets.

"It's toxic here in that regard," said Pruitt, one of a handful of President's Trump's agency heads who is scoring wins on his pro-jobs, anti-regulatory campaign.

Pruitt, speaking confidently about his future, said that critics who have focused on his $50 a night room rental in an Airbnb-style townhouse and his air travel are really out to stop the administration's anti-regulatory effort that has saved $8 billion overall and $1 billion in reduced Environmental Protection Agency regulations.

"This president's courage and commitment to make those things happen and him empowering his teammates in each of these respective agencies to say go forth and get results and get accountability, it's happening. It's happening here, it's happening elsewhere. And do I think that is something that some folks don't like? Absolutely. And do I think they'll use any means to [stop] it? Absolutely. And it's frustrating," Pruitt told us.

The media have been suggesting that Pruitt is on the outs and could be dumped by the White House.

However, the White House Tuesday let it be known that the president called his environmental chief to tell him, "we've got your back." In the call, officials said Trump told Pruitt to "keep his head up" and to "keep fighting." That message was reiterated in a call from White House chief of staff John Kelly Tuesday, according to reports.

Other Trump agency heads have also come under fire, but this was the first time the White House said that the president and his chief of staff called to give one strong support.

Pruitt dismissed the townhouse controversy, explaining that he rented just one room while he looked for permanent housing. The EPA's general counsel issued a reporting calling the rent for one room, about $1,500 a month, "reasonable."

Pruitt said, "I'm dumbfounded that that's controversial." He added that the lobbyist friend from Oklahoma doesn't have business before the EPA.

"When you think of the townhouse, the rent last year. The owner of that is an Oklahoman. I've known him for years. He's the outside counsel for the National Rifle Association, has no clients that are before this agency, nor does his wife have any clients that have appeared before this agency. I've had ethics counsel here at the agency, the office of general counsel and ethics officials review the lease. They've actually looked at the lease. Most of the people who are criticizing me haven't. If you look at the lease it's very clear it's market value," said Pruitt, formerly Oklahoma attorney general.

"You know, I was living out of a suitcase for the first four or five months I was here. My wife was not here. My children were not here. My wife was back at home in Oklahoma until my kid went to college and my child went to law school. So we were actively trying to find a place to live and I was literally living out of a suitcase," he explained of his life in the townhouse where he shared common areas.

Pruitt isn't giving in to the critics. In fact he said he plans to "lean in" and fight harder.

A college baseball player who went on to own an AAA farm team for the Los Angeles Dodgers, he used a sport analogy to call his next play.

"We're leaning in. When a pitcher throws to you inside and tries to knock you off the plate, you get back in the box and get up close to the plate and dare him to throw it inside so you can pull it and knock it out of the park," said Pruitt.

"Look, the goal here is to focus on getting results and as the noise happens...getting the job done," he added.

CNN

[HYPERLINK "https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/politics/scott-pruitt-donald-trump-environment-policy/index.html"]
EPA's Pruitt Fulfilling Trump's Anti-Regulatory Agenda
By Juana Summers and Boris Sanchez, 4/3/18

Washington (CNN)Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt is drawing scrutiny for his housing situation and travel practices, but in his role as the nation's top environmental official, he's a reliable administration foot soldier, making good on President Donald Trump's campaign promises for fewer environmental regulations and to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.

Since he was confirmed to the job last February, Pruitt has taken an aggressive approach to rolling back Obama-era regulations, most recently this week's announcement that he would revise fuel efficiency rules designed to cut back on emissions of greenhouse gases.

"This is another step in the President's regulatory agenda, de-regulatory agenda ... a billion dollars in savings with respect to over 22 significant regulatory actions that we've been involved in here at the agency," Pruitt said at EPA headquarters Tuesday.

The announcement is the latest in a series of moves by Trump and Pruitt to dismantle Barack Obama's environmental legacy, moves that have drawn some scrutiny for their pace and breadth.

In the 14 months since he became the nation's top environmental policy official, Pruitt has bit-by-bit overseen the dismantling of a number of regulations and agreements across the agency, and impacting a wide range of issues. Pruitt has withdrawn the "once in, always in" policy under the Clean Air Act, which determined how facilities that are major sources of hazardous air pollutants are regulated.

He announced plans to repeal the Clean Power Plan, the Obama-era climate rule regulating greenhouse gas emissions. "I do think that the administration has been aggressively deregulatory across the board, across agencies. But the EPA stands out even in that crowd," Lisa Heinzerling, a Georgetown University law professor who served as the EPA's associate administrator for the Office of Policy between July 2009 and December 2010. "(Pruitt's) decisions appear to move all in one direction. He's not just limiting himself to one program. Across the agency, he appears to be acting in a uniformly deregulatory way."

Pruitt is the latest Cabinet official caught up in a swirl of bad press, facing an uncertain future within the Trump administration. But unlike the situations surrounding former Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin and former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the policies he's enacted seem to be in line with the President's policy goals.
In one instance, Pruitt is also now suggesting tacking on additional import restrictions onto a review of fuel efficiency regulations as a way to strengthen Trump's aggressive stance on tariffs and trade, according to a White House official familiar with recent discussions between the administration and the EPA. This source says the changes amount to "crazy import restrictions."

This source did not believe the restrictions would pass muster, but rather saw it as a way for Pruitt to carry favor with the President as the administrator faces intense scrutiny for possible ethical violations. The drafted restrictions would be unrealistic, according to this source, but Pruitt tried to "package it for the President so that it looks that way."

"He is trying so hard to please the President," the source said.

The drafted restrictions, suggested unexpectedly on Friday by Pruitt's office, would raise greenhouse gas standards on imported vehicles as a way to limit the flow of foreign cars entering the United States, as per this source.

"The idea wasn't fully baked," said the source, but it comes at a time when the Trump administration is targeting imports, notably placing tariffs on steel and aluminum.

E&E News
[HYPERLINK "https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060078051"]
Conservatives Rally Behind Pruitt
By Kevin Bogardus and Hannah Northey, 4/3/18

Conservatives are supporting U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt as he struggles with reports of premium travel, high-price security and ties to lobbyists.

Myron Ebell, who led President Trump's EPA transition team, told E&E News that Pruitt has been consequential in achieving the president's goals. Pruitt has proposed repealing several Obama-era regulations, winning plaudits from free-market and business groups that have long battled with EPA.

"We're getting the word out that Administrator Pruitt is doing a good job in implementing the president's agenda and Administrator Pruitt is a key part of that agenda," Ebell said. "We're trying to keep the free-market groups and the conservative groups together in support of the agenda."

Ebell, director of the Competitive Enterprise Institute's Center for Energy and Environment, talked to E&E News on his way to EPA headquarters today to attend Pruitt's announcement of the rollback of Obama-era auto fuel efficiency standards. Ebell declined to speculate whether Pruitt's job is in jeopardy.

"We're policy-oriented, and he is, too, but has to deal with these little messes as best as he can do," Ebell said. "I think he has the confidence of the White House and the president for the good job he is doing, but on these personal issues, I have no idea."

EPA has been contending with reports of Pruitt living part of last year in a Capitol Hill condo tied to a lobbyist whose firm's clients have business before the agency (Greenwire, April 2). Pruitt also considered leasing a private jet on a monthly basis, The Washington Post reported.

Pruitt has caught his boss's attention. The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday that the White House is conducting a review of Pruitt's lease and whether he paid market-value rent.

A White House official told E&E News that President Trump called Pruitt last night and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly called the EPA chief this morning, but the official declined to share details of those discussions. Media reports indicate that Trump and Kelly expressed support for Pruitt and told him to keep fighting.

This morning, reporters asked Trump about Pruitt, and the president replied, "I hope he's going to be great," according to a pool report.

Pruitt in turn praised Trump today while announcing the agency's fuel efficiency plans (see related story).

Trump "made a commitment to the people of Detroit, and he made a commitment to the people of this country," Pruitt said. "The president is again saying, 'America is going to be put first.' ... We have nothing to be apologetic about."

The EPA inspector general is conducting audits of Pruitt's travel, which included the use of first-class and charter flights, and agency spending on his personal security detail, which has spiked compared with past administrators due to an around-the-clock presence by guards.

EPA IG spokesman Jeff Lagda said the watchdog office estimates it will release both those audits by this summer.

The Atlantic also reported today that Pruitt gave pay raises to two political aides against White House wishes, using a unique hiring authority under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Pruitt's use of "administratively determined" positions is also under IG review.

Despite those issues, industry sources said Pruitt — one of the most effective members of Trump's Cabinet — is staying put.

"The president likes him," said one industry lawyer and lobbyist. "The question is, is he bringing home the bacon for the administration? I think the answer is yes."

The White House's ultimate measure of Cabinet officials is their ability to stay on task and produce results consistent with Trump's overarching objectives, said the energy attorney and lobbyist. Trump often notes that Pruitt's regulatory rollback is a crowd pleaser — sometimes more so than tax reform — making him one of the most successful Cabinet members, said the source.

Tom Pyle, president of the conservative nonprofit Institute for Energy Research, said it would be a mistake for the White House to remove Pruitt and leave the agency without a leader as it evaluates a slew of major regulations, including the Clean Power Plan, the Clean Water Rule and auto efficiency standards. Pyle also hinted at tough sledding in the Senate for any new pick to lead EPA.

"Any new nominee with a hope of getting confirmed would have to be more like [former EPA Administrator] Christine Todd Whitman than Scott Pruitt," Pyle said.

Sources acknowledged that talk of Pruitt's replacement has churned for months but said those discussions have centered on his political aspirations — not Trump's displeasure.

If Pruitt were to leave, possible contenders to lead the agency include air chief Bill Wehrum and Andrew Wheeler, whom Trump nominated to be EPA deputy administrator. One industry attorney also pointed to Jeff Holmstead, a former EPA air chief under President George W. Bush who is now at Bracewell LLP.

There is a leadership change already underway; acting Deputy Administrator Mike Flynn is retiring from the agency today. It's not clear who will be the next No. 2 at EPA, as the agency is waiting on the Senate to confirm Wheeler (see related story).

Meanwhile, Democrats are seeking to keep the pressure on Pruitt. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) as well as Reps. Don Beyer (D-Va.) and Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) each sent letters today to the EPA IG calling for an investigation into Pruitt's lease for the lobbyist-linked condo.

Democrats on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee today cited Pruitt's travel expenses and requested a hearing into whether the Trump administration has "adequate controls in place to protect taxpayer money when it comes to the travel of members of this administration."

The letter, sent by Oversight ranking member Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.), notes that many federal agencies and the White House have refused to provide information sought by the committee in an investigation into improper air travel by the Trump administration.

"The extensive use of noncommercial aircraft by multiple members of the Trump administration is disrespectful to the American taxpayers who foot the bill for these expenses," the pair wrote to Oversight Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.).

Also, Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce Committee sent a letter yesterday to Pruitt raising questions about his condo lease, saying his low-value rent could be a prohibited gift from a lobbyist.

Ebell said he doesn't know what the future holds for Pruitt. He has been surprised by President Trump's personnel moves in the past, including the abrupt firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

"Look at some of the surprises," Ebell said. "Maybe he [Pruitt] will get a promotion."

Fox News

[HYPERLINK "http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/04/03/epa-pruitt-announce-rollback-obama-era-fuel-standards-setting-up-another-battle-with-california.html"]

EPA, Pruitt Announce Rollback Of Obama-Era Fuel Standards, Setting Up Another Battle With California
By Andrew O'Reilly, 4/3/18

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt laid out plans on Tuesday to roll back Obama-era fuel standards in a move seen as a win for automakers, but one that is likely to ignite a major political and legal battle with the nation's most populous state.

"These standards that were set were inappropriate and need to be revised," Pruitt said during a speech at the EPA in Washington D.C., adding that the rules are too expensive and hurt car buyers by making vehicles costlier.

"The focus should be on making cars that people actually buy and that are efficient," he said.

Pruitt's decision to rewrite the nation's first carbon limits on automobiles, which requires cars and light trucks sold in the United States to average more than 50 miles per gallon by 2025, reflects both the power of the country's automakers and the Trump administration's determination to jump start the car industry.

"This was the right decision, and we support the Administration for pursuing a data-driven effort and a single national program as it works to finalize future standards," the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, which includes General Motors, Ford and Fiat Chrysler, said in a statement. "We appreciate that the Administration is working to find a way to both increase fuel economy standards and keep new vehicles affordable to more Americans."

The move, however, once again pits the Trump administration against the state of California.

Under the 1970 Clean Air Act, California can set its own greenhouse gas emissions standards and has threatened to sue the federal government if its waiver is withdrawn and the state is blocked from imposing the more austere limits. A showdown between California and the Trump administration would have wide-ranging implications as currently 12 other states – making up more than a third of the U.S. auto market – follow the Golden State's emissions standards.

"The Trump Administration's assault on clean car standards risks our ability to protect our children's health, tackle climate change, and save hardworking Americans money," California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said in a statement on Monday. "We're ready to file suit if needed to protect these critical standards and to fight the Administration's war on our environment. California didn't become the sixth-largest economy in the world by spectating."

A coalition of at least 14 state attorneys general joined Becerra on Monday in calling the rollback "irrational and irresponsible" and vowing to "vigorously and aggressively challenge President Trump's dangerous anti-environmental agenda in court."

While Pruitt did not specifically address California during Tuesday's announcement, the administrator noted in a statement released Monday that the EPA would be reexamining California's waiver and that "[c]ooperative federalism doesn't mean that one state can dictate standards for the rest of the country."

"EPA will set a national standard for greenhouse gas emissions that allows auto manufacturers to make cars that people both want and can afford — while still expanding environmental and safety benefits of newer cars," he added. "It is in America's best interest to have a national standard, and we look forward to partnering with all states, including California, as we work to finalize that standard."

The move by the EPA is the latest in a series of battles between the federal government and California, which has emerged as the staunchest opponent to the Trump administration's policies. The EPA's announcement of the rollback occurred on the same day the Justice Department sued California to block a new state law limiting the transfers of federal lands.

"Yet again, Donald Trump and his administration are attacking our state and our very way of life," Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, a member of the State Lands Commission and a Democrat running for governor, said in a statement.

The Trump administration also wants to make it easier to drill for oil and gas off California's coast and last year's tax overhaul law is seen as particularly harmful to the state as it limits mortgage interest and state and local taxes.

Then there is the immigration debate, with the Justice Department suing California to overturn a state law that limits the power of federal immigration authorities and Trump recently calling the state "out of control" during a visit to view border wall prototypes.

Pruitt's announcement was originally scheduled for Monday at a Chevrolet car dealership in Chantilly, Virginia, but was cancelled. Guy Eberhart, the general manager of Pohanka Chevrolet, told Fox News that he had no knowledge of Pruitt planning to visit the dealership.

NBC News

[HYPERLINK "https://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigations/Suspect-in-You-Tube-Shooting-Posted-Rants-About-the-Company-Online--478711713.html"]

Suspect In Youtube Shooting Posted Rants About The Company Online

By Michael Bott, Kevin Nious, Bethney Bonilla and Liz Wagner, 4/4/18

The NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit has confirmed the identity of the shooter who opened fire on YouTube's campus in San Bruno Tuesday. Nasim Aghdam, 39, lived in Southern California and appears to have had a robust presence on YouTube.

In a video posted in January 2017, she says YouTube "discriminated and filtered" her content. In the video, Aghdam says her channel used to get lots of views but that after being "filtered" by the company, it received far fewer views.

In one online rant, she complained that YouTube censored her content by imposing an age restriction on one of her workout videos because they were too racy. She says the company failed to do the same thing for stars like Miley Cyrus and Nicki Minaj, whose videos, she says, are inappropriate for children.

In a Facebook post from February 2017, Aghdam blasted YouTube saying, "There is no equal growth opportunity on YouTube."

On her personal webpage, she posted another rant about YouTube saying, "Be aware...there is no free speech in real world and you will be suppressed for telling the truth that is not supported by the system. Videos of targeted users are filtered and merely relegated, so that people can hardly see their videos." Aghdam also quotes Adolf Hitler, saying, "Make the lie big, make it simple, keep saying it, and eventually they will believe it."

On her Instagram account she posted a video along with a caption reading, "What do you think of freedom of speech and does it really exist in western countries?"

It appears Aghdam controlled multiple YouTube channels, including one with videos of her speaking Farsi. Aghdam posted videos about an array of topics including hand art and animal rights.

In 2009, she protested the military's use of pigs in training exercises. A news report by The San Diego Union Tribune shows a photo of Aghdam holding a plastic sword and spattered in blood as part of the demonstration by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

The NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit has also learned the license plate on a car towed from YouTube's campus Tuesday is registered to Aghdam. In 2014, she posted a video on YouTube of what appears to be the same car, stating that it was vandalized by "anti-vegans" because a bumper sticker said, "meat is murder."

Aghdam shot three victims in the courtyard of the YouTube campus in San Bruno on Tuesday. Police say she then killed herself. Law enforcement officials say they believe that the motive behind the shooting is a domestic-related dispute.

CNBC

[HYPERLINK "https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/04/china-new-us-tariffs-including-soy-cars-and-chemicals.html"]
China Announces New Tariffs On 106 US Products, Including Soy, Cars And Chemicals
By Sam Meredith, 4/4/18

China announced additional tariffs on 106 U.S. products on Wednesday, in a move likely to heighten global concerns of a tit-for-tat trade war between the world's biggest economies.

The effective start date for the new charges was not announced, though China's Ministry of Commerce said the tariffs are designed to target up to $50 billion of U.S. products annually.

The 25 percent levy on U.S. imports includes products such as soybeans, cars and whiskey, Beijing said. The full list can be found here.

Trade showdown
The move comes less than 24 hours after President Donald Trump unveiled a list of Chinese imports that he aims to target as part of a crackdown on what he deems as unfair trade practices.

Sectors covered by Trump's proposed tariffs include products used for robotics, information technology, communication technology and aerospace.

The trade showdown between Washington and Beijing has rattled investors and fueled market fears that the dispute could soon spiral into a full-blown trade war.

When asked whether global markets were now officially observing an all-out trade war, Goldman Sachs' chief global equity strategist, Peter Oppenheimer, told CNBC: "I think it is clearly a trade battle at the very least."

"I think the anxiety the market is reflecting is that it could escalate into a generalized (trade) war," he added.

China's proposed countermeasures prompted U.S. stock futures to tumble ahead of Wednesday's open.

Meanwhile, Wednesday's announcement also prompted European stocks to extend losses, with the pan-European Stoxx 600 hitting a session low of 0.8 percent shortly after the news.

"I think Beijing is very keen to show that it is not going to be bullied, too," Neil Dwane, global strategist at Allianz Global Investors, told CNBC on Wednesday.

"(China) is going to position this as them responding to American aggression rather than necessarily being part of the problem," he added.

The Chinese yuan also suffered its biggest daily fall against the dollar in two weeks after the measures were proposed. The currency slipped 0.4 percent to hit 6.3015 per dollar.

TRUMP TWEETS

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 3m

When you're already $500 Billion DOWN, you can't lose!

887 737 2.8K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 2h

We are not in a trade war with China, that war was lost many years ago by the foolish, or incompetent, people who represented the U.S. Now we have a Trade Deficit of $500 Billion a year, with Intellectual Property Theft of another $300 Billion. We cannot let this continue!

12K 11K 42K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 2h

Our Border Laws are very weak while those of Mexico & Canada are very strong. Congress must change these Obama era, and other, laws NOW! The Democrats stand in our way - they want people to pour into our country unchecked...CRIME! We will be taking strong action today.

8.5K 9.1K 36K

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 16h

Was just briefed on the shooting at YouTube's HQ in San Bruno, California. Our thoughts and prayers are with everybody involved. Thank you to our phenomenal Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders that are currently on the scene.

22K 17K 89K