

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0301

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill, we urge you to block all funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for private public relations (PR) services.

As revealed in a December 8, 2015 article in *The Hill*, the watchdog group Open the Books reported that the federal government has spent more than \$4 billion on public relations since 2007, with over \$2 billion going to private firms. Shockingly, several of these private PR firms charged federal agencies \$40-\$88 an hour for the work of an intern.

According to the Open the Books report, “Federal agencies...not only resist transparency but often pretend to be transparent when, in reality, they are engaged in self-promotion. Too often, they use their charge to disclose information as a cover for public relations campaigns that are designed to advance their interests (i.e. their desire for more funding and higher salaries) rather than the public interest.”

The EPA, an agency whose corruption and duplicity is almost beyond compare in the annals of American history, has been particularly egregious in this respect. Already under heavy scrutiny for its potentially illegal solicitation of comments in drafting its Waters of the United States Rule, the EPA continues to waste millions of dollars each year on advertising and public relations, much of it paid to private firms. In fact, from 2000-2014, the EPA spent a total of \$170

million dollars on PR, \$26 million of which went to private consultants. At times, the agency has employed nearly 200 employees to handle public affairs.

Government transparency is important to the health of our Republic, but exorbitant spending on advertising, polls, and private firms does not reflect the priorities of a government that is more than \$19 trillion dollars in debt. Instead of hiring more people to advertise and spin what the government is doing, we should be more discerning stewards of the taxpayer dime. In Open the Books' words, "Agencies certainly aren't charged with using taxpayer funds to engage in thinly-veiled propaganda campaigns that are primarily designed to protect their budgets and hype outcomes."

Accordingly, we ask that you include report language similar to the following:

"Sec. __. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Environmental Protection Agency to pay for any services performed by private advertising and public relations firms."

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Jason Smith
Member of Congress



Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress