

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: POLITICO Pro Energy
Sent: Tue 5/23/2017 9:44:19 AM
Subject: Morning Energy, presented by POET: Deep energy cuts in Trump budget but Congress shrugs — Three tapped by Trump for NRC slots — Smith probes actions of EPA scientific integrity official

By Anthony Adragna | 05/23/2017 05:42 AM EDT

With help from Darius Dixon

TRUMP BUDGET DAY: At long last, the budget process really kicks off, but what's arguably most notable about President Donald Trump's first official budget out today is how many members of his own party are greeting it with a shrug. It's unusual for the gulf between the Republican-led White House and Congress to be so vast, but lawmakers have warned for weeks that anything like the March "skinny" budget would not make it through their chambers. With that caution in mind, here are a couple of the highlights from Trump's fiscal 2018 budget request:

— It would restart the nuclear waste fee — a 0.1-cent charge on nuclear power plant owners for each kilowatt-hour of electricity generated — in 2020 to the tune of \$381 million. The fee had been pulling in about \$750 million a year when states and industry successfully forced DOE to stop collecting it unless the agency reconstituted its Yucca Mountain waste project or Congress changed the law that selected the site.

— It would open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling, which the administration estimates would earn Alaska an estimated \$1.8 billion over the next decade.

— It calls for the sale of about 250 million barrels of oil from DOE's Strategic Petroleum Reserve, designed to protect the U.S. from oil shocks and which has on occasion kept domestic fuel prices from skyrocketing during national emergencies.

— It seeks to halt to royalty payments to the Gulf Coast states from energy produced in federal waters. The states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas currently receive up to \$500 million per year under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006.

Overall, the budget calls for EPA to be funded at \$5.7 billion, a more than 31 percent cut. It would give DOE funding of \$28 billion, a 1.7 percent cut, though it's non-nuclear security work would be slashed 18 percent. Interior would get \$11.7 billion, a 10.9 percent cut. The Army Corps of Engineers would have its budget shrunk 16.3 percent to \$5 billion. An executive summary of the document is [here](#).

Pro's Ben Lefebvre has [more deets](#) on some energy-specific provisions in the budget, while POLITICO's Andrew Restuccia, Matthew Nussbaum and Sarah Ferris [look at](#) how it hits Trump's own voters hardest.

TRUMP TO NOMINATE THREE FOR NRC: Faithful readers [learned it was coming earlier this month](#), but the White House formally announced Trump's plans to reappoint Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki late Monday, Pro's Darius Dixon [reports](#). She faces a serious time crunch and would have to step down, even temporarily, if the Senate doesn't confirm her to another five-year term by June 30. The longtime NRC commissioner is up for a term ending in 2022.

In addition, Trump announced his intent to nominate Annie Caputo and David Wright to two vacant spots on the commission. Caputo, whose term would expire in 2021, currently works on the Senate Environment and Public Works Commission and Wright, a former chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Commission and ex-president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, would be up for a seat expiring in 2020.

WELCOME TO TUESDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Virgent Realty's Ben Kubic (a longtime ME friend) was first to guess that all 50 states currently produce some wine (can ME interest you in an [Idaho Petite Sirah](#) or a [Rhode Island Chardonnay](#) or even a [Mississippi Sweet Rose](#))? For today: Who is the wealthiest current member of Congress? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](#), [@Morning_Energy](#), and [@POLITICOPro](#).

SMITH CHARGES BIAS BY EPA OFFICIAL REVIEWING PRUITT: House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) is questioning the integrity of Francesca Grifo, EPA's scientific integrity official, who he says is skewing heavily toward inviting environmental advocates to an annual stakeholder meeting, Pro's Alex Guillén [reports](#). Grifo in March was [asked to look into](#) a complaint that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt violated the agency's scientific integrity policy by claiming carbon dioxide is not a primary contributor to climate change. A spokeswoman for Smith said his Monday [letter](#), which was also signed by Rep. [Andy Biggs](#), was not about that inquiry but simply about promoting a "diversity of voices" at that meeting. The lawmakers asked Pruitt to either invite more industry representatives to the meeting or open it to the public at large.

SUPERFUND TASK FORCE ANNOUNCED: Pruitt announced the formation of a task force for the agency's Superfund program Monday tasked with delivering recommendations within 30 days on how to improve the program's operation and efficiency. According to [a memo](#) released by the agency, the group will be led by Albert Kelly, senior adviser to the administrator, as well as representatives from the Office of Land and Emergency Management, the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, the Office of General Counsel and EPA Region 3.

Pointing this out: Pruitt [tweeted](#) that he addressed the Large Public Power Council about his plan to bring "energy independence" to the country. It's a frequent talking point for Pruitt, but not one that's part of the agency's historical mission. According to its [own website](#), EPA's purpose is to protect human health and the environment. Pruitt also [dropped by](#) the Congressional Coal Caucus meeting Monday where he again talked about energy independence. Another [pic](#).

DOE DEP TO CASH OUT OF SMALL UTILITIES: Dan "Danny" Brouillette, Rick Perry's No. 2-in-waiting for the Energy Department, has [agreed to give up interests](#) he holds in four electricity-related entities: the Austin Electric Utility System, Florida utility nonprofit JEA, the Omaha Public Power District, and the Salt River Project. According to the [financial disclosure](#) filing associated with his nomination, Brouillette holds somewhere between \$60,000 and \$200,000 in combined investments in the four utilities he expects to give up, if confirmed by the Senate. Brouillette worked at DOE in the early years of the George W. Bush administration, but has spent nearly 11 years as an executive with USAA. His ethics agreement states that he'll get a

few payments from the bank once he resigns, including a severance within 30 days and deferred compensation payments in 2018 and 2019. Brouillette has a nomination hearing this Thursday.

BILLS MULLED ALTERING OZONE REQUIREMENTS: Lawmakers on a Senate EPW subcommittee gather today to hear testimony on two bills that would tweak regulatory requirements surrounding EPA's ozone standards. One, the Ozone Standards Implementation Act (S. 263), would extend state deadlines to submit implementation plans for the revised 2015 ozone standard of 70 parts per billion until 2026 and extend the review cycle for EPA from five to 10 years. The other bill, the ORDEAL Act (S. 452), would also lengthen the statutory period for reviewing and updating National Ambient Air Quality Standards from five years to 10, while delaying enforcement of the revised 2015 standard until 2025. Ahead of the session, 14 health groups released a letter opposing the Ozone Standards Implementation Act.

**** A message from POET - one of the world's largest ethanol producers:** With scientists and engineers, POET operates 30 biofuel facilities & America's first cellulosic biofuel plant. We produce a cleaner fuel for millions of drivers, every day. We're POET and we're driving innovation, from the ground up. Learn more here. **

SCIENCE PANEL LOOKS AT STATE ROLE IN RULEMAKING: The House Science Subcommittee on Environment gathers today to look at interactions between federal and state environmental agencies as EPA develops regulations like regional haze, ozone and cross-state air pollution. Two top state environmental regulators — Arizona's Misael Cabrera and Arkansas' Becky Keogh — are the majority witnesses, while Deborah Swackhamer, chairwoman of the embattled EPA Board of Scientific Counselors, is the Democratic witness. Expect significant questioning on Pruitt's efforts to reshape the scientific advisory board by reopening the nomination process.

CARPER SEEKS INFO ON EPA ENFORCEMENT: Top Senate EPW Democrat Tom Carper released a letter Monday seeking information from Pruitt related to potential settlements between Devon Energy and the agency. He also requested broader information on EPA enforcement work. The letter stemmed from a New York Times report that said Devon backed out of a settlement with the agency five days after Pruitt's confirmation.

MORE CLIMATE VOICES WEIGH IN: As Germany's environment minister Barbara Hendricks warned Monday of serious consequences should the U.S. leave the Paris climate change agreement, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions sent a memo to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and White House international energy aide George David Banks urging the U.S. to renegotiate aspects of the accord but to remain a part of it. Meanwhile, the Partnership for Responsible Growth is out with the third in a series of TV ads airing on CNN, Fox News and MSNBC programs known to be watched by Trump urging action to address climate change.

MAIL CALL! BENNET, HICKENLOOPER FIGHT FOR MONUMENTS: Two top Colorado Democrats — Sen. Michael Bennet and Gov. John Hickenlooper — have asked Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke not to alter any existing national monument designations in their state. "Such actions would deprive the future generations of Americans who have yet to experience these iconic landscapes or study their rich history," they wrote in a letter.

SENATORS URGE PRESERVATION OF PARK RULE: Sens. [Bill Nelson](#) (D-Fla.), [Tom Udall](#) (D-N.M.), [Lamar Alexander](#) (R-Tenn.) and [Rob Portman](#) (R-Ohio) sent a letter to Zinke urging him to preserve an Obama-era regulation overseeing oil drilling on park lands. "The National Park Service developed updates to their 9B rule over the course of several years, engaging in a thorough and transparent public process that sought input from a variety of stakeholders," they wrote. Zinke ordered a review of the regulation in late March in response to Trump's executive order calling for the review any policy that could potentially hinder domestic energy production.

GREENS URGE NO OFFSHORE DRILLING: More than 130 environmental advocacy groups, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, Earthworks, Greenpeace and Rainforest Action Network, sent Zinke a letter Monday urging him against moving forward on plans to expand offshore oil drilling and related seismic testing.

STABENOW CHALLENGER HAS ENERGY TIES: Lena Epstein, co-owner of Vesco Oil Corp., which distributes automotive and industrial lubricants, announced Monday she'll challenge [Debbie Stabenow](#) for her Senate seat. "I will take the fight directly to Debbie Stabenow because she has failed the people of Michigan after almost two decades in Washington with no major accomplishments," she said in a statement announcing her candidacy. She co-chaired Trump's 2016 campaign in the state.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman [Lisa Murkowski](#) celebrated her birthday Monday! She [tweeted](#) she spent her weekend "at Anchorage farmers market" followed by "a dream picnic on Ruth Glacier on Denali w/ family." Zinke [added his best wishes](#) and said he was "looking forward to seeing Alaska's gorgeous and iconic public lands some time!"

MOVER, SHAKER: Maggie Molina has been named senior director of policy for the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy; Pasha Majdi also joins the organization as federal policy manager from his previous role as a professional staff member on Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

The Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago has named **Jeff Holmstead**, former top air official at EPA, and **Sue Tierney**, former assistant secretary for policy at DOE, as its inaugural visiting fellows in policy practice.

Loren Blackford has become the next president of the Sierra Club's board of directors as the organization elected its first-ever all female executive committee. Other members of the board are Vice President Susana Reyes of California, Treasurer Elizabeth Walsh of Texas, Secretary Robin Mann of Pennsylvania, and Fifth Officer Margrete Strand-Rangnes.

TAKE A GLANCE! NATIONAL MONUMENTS SPOTLIGHTED: House Natural Resources Democrats released [the first](#) in a weekly series of fact sheets spotlighting national monuments currently under review by the Trump administration. First up: the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.

The Sierra Club released [a video](#) urging voters to resist EPA cuts in the Trump budget by calling their members of Congress. It will air in Missouri, Maine, Montana, Ohio and Pennsylvania, as well as on social media.

NATSO, the National Association of Convenience Stores and the Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America are out with [a video](#) examining what they say would be the negative impact of the shift the Point of Obligation under the Renewable Fuel Standard.

BORDER TAX DOC RELEASED: The Joint Committee on Taxation released an informational [report](#) Monday on border adjustment tax proposals that would have significant impacts on the energy sector. More from Pro Tax's Brian Faler [here](#).

QUICK HITS

- White House Moves to Block Ethics Inquiry Into Ex-Lobbyists on Payroll. [New York Times](#).
- EPA Experts Increasingly Shut Out of Public Statements, Some Complain. [Bloomberg BNA](#).
- How a Small Town Is Standing Up to Fracking. [Rolling Stone](#).
- 2 More Leaks Found Along Dakota Access Pipeline. [AP](#).
- Chinese Solar Makers Shown \$55 Million Path to Avoid Tariffs. [Bloomberg](#).
- Interior Department agency removes climate change language from news release. [Washington Post](#).
- Ken Salazar Working For Anadarko After Promising To Honor Federal Ethics Law. [International Business Times](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

10:00 a.m. — House Science subcommittee [hearing](#) on states and EPA rulemaking, 2318 Rayburn

10:00 a.m. — Legislative [hearing](#) on four bills, House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands, 1324 Longworth

10:00 a.m. — "[Balance for Oil, Imbalance for LNG?](#)" Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW

11:30 a.m. — The American Biogas Council, the Coalition for Renewable Natural Gas and the Environmental and Energy Study Institute host a [lunch briefing](#) on "the untapped energy in domestic wastes," 201-00 Capitol Visitor Center (Senate side)

11:30 a.m. — Labor and environmental groups release a new report on clean car technology building, RSVP: nconger@nrdc.org

1:00 p.m. — 2017 RNG [Summit](#) Industry, Policy & Regulatory Forum, American Gas Association, 400 N Capitol St NW #450

2:30 p.m. — Senate Environment and Public Works subcommittees hold [hearing](#) on two ozone bills, 406 Dirksen

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To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/05/deep-energy-cuts-in-trump-budget-but-congress-shrugs-022957>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Trump budget would open ANWR, stop oil payments to Gulf states [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 05/22/2017 09:03 PM EDT

The Trump administration's budget proposal calls for opening the the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil drilling, halting energy royalty payments to states along the Gulf of Mexico and selling off half of the country's strategic oil reserves.

The measures, which the White House says would trim \$22 billion from the deficit over the next decade, are sure to draw criticism from Congress, and will anger environmentalists who oppose opening the Alaska wildlife refuge, as well as state governments along the Gulf.

President Donald Trump has promised to sharply expand oil and gas production, particularly in federal waters, but the budget proposal would represent a blow to the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, whose coastal waters are home to the vast majority of the nation's offshore energy production.

The White House estimates that repealing the law that allots royalty payments to the Gulf Coast states from energy produced in federal waters would save \$3.6 billion through 2027. Under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006, each state receives up to \$500 million per year — money Trump aims to keep in federal coffers.

But the budget proposal would earn Alaska an estimated \$1.8 billion over the next decade by opening up ANWR for oil and gas drilling, a move that Alaska's Republican Sens. [Lisa Murkowski](#) and [Dan Sullivan](#) have called for in a [bill](#) they submitted in January.

The ANWR proposal, which follows Trump's already contentious attempts to open up Arctic waters off Alaska's northern shore for drilling, would be sure to draw fire from conservation groups that for decades have opposed opening up the 19-million-acre onshore wildlife refuge for drilling.

The White House also said it could shrink the federal deficit by \$16.6 billion over the coming decade by selling off half the oil that the Department of Energy holds for emergencies. The sale from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would total about 250 million barrels — based on Energy Information Administration figures — and is based on an oil price of about \$66 a barrel, about 30 percent higher than the current price.

The sale of half the SPR inventories that are stored in four underground storage facilities in Texas and Louisiana does not go as far as the recommendations from the conservative Heritage Foundation, which has argued that all of the reserves should be sold.

The reserves have played a part in keeping fuel prices from skyrocketing during national emergencies. DOE issued about 20.8 million barrels from the reserves in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina shut refineries along the Gulf Coast, bringing about a quarter of the country's fuel production to a halt.

DOE also loaned Marathon Petroleum 1 million barrels of oil for three months when Tropical Storm Isaac shut down oil production in the Gulf Coast in 2012.

Also among the more arcane revenue generators in Trump's budget is a plan to sell off tens of thousands of miles of publicly owned electric transmission assets in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest owned by the Western Area Power Administration, the Southwestern Power Administration, and the Bonneville Power Administration.

The White House estimates that the sale would bring in \$2.4 billion in 2019, with continuing income as Bonneville assets are sold off over 10 years.

Eric Wolff contributed to this story.

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Trump's budget hits his own voters hardest [Back](#)

By Andrew Restuccia, Matthew Nussbaum and Sarah Ferris | 05/22/2017 09:00 PM EDT

Donald Trump, whose populist message and promises to help American workers propelled him to the White House, is set to issue a budget proposal on Tuesday that instead takes aim at the social safety net on which many of his supporters rely.

Rather than breaking with Washington precedent, Trump's spending blueprint follows established conservative orthodoxy, cutting taxes on the wealthy, boosting defense spending and taking a hatchet to programs for the poor and disabled - potentially hurting many of the rural and low-income Americans that voted him into office.

The budget proposal underscores the wide gulf between campaigning and governing, even for a president who promised to rewrite the presidential rule book.

The president's budget plan calls for more than \$1 trillion in cuts to a wide range of social programs with millions of beneficiaries, from farm subsidies to federal student aid. That includes a \$600 billion cut to Medicaid over 10 years, despite Trump's repeated promises on the campaign trail not to cut the program. The budget also takes an ax to the federal food stamp program and Social Security Disability Insurance.

Trump also proposes some of the deepest cuts to agriculture subsidies since Ronald Reagan, squeezing out nearly \$50 billion over 10 years.

Trump's budget would drastically cut domestic programs controlled by Congress, slashing \$1.7 trillion over 10 years. At the end of the decade, the U.S. would spend nearly twice as much on defense as on other domestic programs. Domestic discretionary spending would be capped at \$429 billion per year, below 2004 levels, while military spending soars to \$722 billion.

The annual budget proposal - which has no chance of becoming law as proposed even though Republicans control Congress because GOP lawmakers write their own budget - serves as a starting point for negotiations and as a messaging document for the president and his party.

"There's a certain philosophy wrapped up in the budget and that is — we are no longer going to measure compassion by the number of programs or the number of people on those programs," White House Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, one of the budget's chief architects, told reporters on Monday. "We're not going to measure our success by how much money we spend, but by how many people we actually help."

Mulvaney rejected accusations that Trump's budget unfairly targets the poor, arguing instead that it amounts to a broad rethink of the country's welfare system.

"We need folks to work. We need people to go to work. If you're on food stamps, and you're able-bodied, we need you to go to work. If you're on disability insurance and you're not supposed to be, we need you to work," he added. "There's a dignity to work, and there's a necessity to work."

Mulvaney, a former South Carolina congressman and founding member of the conservative Freedom Caucus, has long sought dramatic cuts to Medicaid and other programs.

Mulvaney said the budget does not touch "mainline" or "core" Social Security, but it does cut Social Security's disability insurance. The White House is also leaning on anti-fraud programs to save billions of dollars in Medicare.

The White House plans to heavily promote its commitment to Social Security and Medicare, though its attempt to eliminate the federal deficit while largely preserving those entitlement programs — which together make up the bulk of federal spending — will leave behind a path of destruction for other safety net programs.

Trump's budget would tighten the belt on programs for low-income families ranging from cash assistance to the child tax credit. Nearly \$200 billion in cuts will come directly from the federal food stamp program, which helps feed 44 million people each year.

Trump would also slash \$72 billion by tightening the rules for programs for people with disabilities — programs that Trump's advisers have described as riddled with fraud and abuse. A federal watchdog, however, found last year that 17 anti-fraud programs already exist.

In an administration document outlining budget talking points, the White House pitched its proposal as a way to replace "dependency with dignity of work." The internal guidance, which POLITICO obtained early Monday, highlights an estimated \$193 billion in savings by further limiting who can receive food stamps. The administration estimates \$40 billion in savings over 10 years by preventing illegal immigrants from claiming the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit, which provides a break to households making up to about \$53,000 per year, depending on family size and filing status.

"If I had sort of a subtitle for this budget, it would be the 'Taxpayer First' budget," Mulvaney said Monday. "This is, I think, the first time in a long time that an administration has written a budget through the eyes of the people who are actually paying the taxes. So often in Washington I think we look only on the recipient side — how does the budget affect those who either receive or don't receive benefits?"

Democrats, who have opposed cuts announced in drafts released earlier this year, reiterated their objections ahead of the budget's release.

"Candidate Trump campaigned as a populist, said he wanted to help the working people, but since he has taken office he has governed like a hard-right conservative — pushing policies that help the uber wealthy at the expense of the middle class," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement Sunday night.

"It's a complete about-face," said Seth Hanlon, a former economic adviser to Barack Obama. "It's a betrayal of a lot of people who put their faith in him."

But even some Republicans — both inside and outside Congress — say they're worried about the sheer magnitude of the proposed cuts.

"I'm deeply concerned about the severity of the domestic cuts," Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), a long-

time member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, told POLITICO on Friday.

Rogers has been an outspoken critic of Trump's proposed cuts to programs that benefit rural regions like his home state, like the Appalachian Regional Commission.

"I think we do need healthcare reform. I think we do need welfare reform. But the kinds of reductions that he's talking about go exactly against the states that brought [Trump] to the dance, so to speak," said G. William Hoagland, a former long-time Republican Senate budget aide.

He added, "The argument can be made that there are certainly programs that are not achieving their goals. That doesn't mean we should take the money away and forget about it."

The White House says it expected a "mixed" reaction from Hill Republicans, according to a senior administration official. The defense hikes and tax cuts are sure to be popular, but many of the cuts could make more moderate Republicans skittish. "It's more than a messaging document and it begins the negotiations," the official said.

Republicans on Capitol Hill are expected to deliver their rebuttal to the White House's budget proposal in mid-June, about two months behind schedule.

While the congressional document is also in many ways a wish list, it serves to set the spending levels that lawmakers must abide by the ensuing year. The delay of that document means appropriators will face a time crunch ahead of the September deadline to fund the government or avert a shutdown.

The Trump administration is relying on more than aggressive cuts to mandatory programs to achieve its goal of eliminating the deficit within 10 years - a gold standard of budget writing.

The White House is also making a rosy assumption of 3 percent economic growth - nearly double the 1.9 percent rate estimated by Congress' nonpartisan scorekeeper - to help offset its ambitious spending plans. That includes \$200 billion for new infrastructure projects as well as \$19 billion for paid family leave.

The budget blueprint also assumes that Trump's tax reform plan, which is still in the early stages of being written, will go into effect. Officials said that plan is expected to deliver a boost to the economy without adding to its bottom line, but produced no details beyond a one-page document released in April.

Trump's proposed budgets for federal departments and agencies next year are mostly unchanged from the so-called skinny budget the administration released earlier this year, despite the public outcry from some disgruntled Cabinet members

A half-dozen agencies got slight boosts in their budgets, however, including those in the departments of Agriculture, Interior and Labor. The State Department, which faced some of the harshest cuts in Trump's first budget draft, is slated for a \$2.6 billion bump compared with the March numbers.

Jennifer Scholtes contributed to this report.

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Sources: Trump expected to announce NRC nominees [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 05/02/2017 11:34 AM EDT

President Donald Trump is expected to soon announce nominees for a pair of vacant seats on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, according to two sources who closely track the agency.

Nuclear expert Annie Caputo and former South Carolina utility regulator David Wright are to be nominated, the sources said. And Trump plans to tap NRC Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki for another five-year term after her term expires June 30.

The timing of the announcement is unclear.

Caputo, who previously worked for Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) and the House Energy and Commerce Committee, has been a subject of nomination chatter among industry and NRC watchers for nearly two years. She joined Sen. [John Barrasso](#)'s staff when the Wyoming Republican took over the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee earlier this year.

Wright, a former chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Commission and ex-president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, has long been vocal about addressing the nation's stockpiles of nuclear waste stored at reactor sites around the country. He later started his own consulting firm.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

WHAT'S NEXT: A formal White House nomination is still needed in order for the Senate Environment and Public Works to process the candidates. Svinicki's term expires on June 30 and, unlike with many other federal boards and commissions, she would have to step down temporarily if the Senate fails to confirm her by that date.

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Trump to tap Caputo and Wright for NRC, renominate Svinicki [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon | 05/22/2017 08:02 PM EDT

President Donald Trump intends to nominate Annie Caputo and David Wright to a pair of vacant seats on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, while reappointing agency Chairwoman Kristine Svinicki, the White House announced tonight.

Svinicki, who had been an NRC commissioner for nine years before Trump elevated her to the chairmanship in January, is facing a time crunch. Unlike many other federal boards and commissions, NRC leadership members would have to step down, even temporarily, if the Senate fails to confirm for another five-year term by June 30. She'll be up for a term ending in 2022.

Caputo, who previously worked for Sen. [Jim Inhofe](#) and the House Energy and Commerce Committee, has been a subject of nomination chatter among industry and NRC watchers for nearly two years. She joined Sen. [John Barrasso](#)'s staff when the Wyoming Republican took over the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee earlier this year, and is to be appointed to term expiring in 2021.

Wright, a former chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Commission and ex-president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, has long been vocal about addressing the nation's stockpiles of nuclear waste stored at reactor sites around the country. He later started his own consulting firm. The White House plans to put him up for a seat expiring in 2020.

POLITICO [reported](#) all three names earlier this month.

WHAT'S NEXT: The White House still needs to send the nominations to the Senate before the Senate Environment and Public Works can process the candidates. Svinicki's term expires on June 30 and she would have to step down temporarily if the Senate fails to confirm her by then.

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Smith alleges bias from EPA scientific integrity official [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/22/2017 05:30 PM EDT

House Science Chairman [Lamar Smith](#) is questioning the integrity of an EPA official charged with reviewing Administrator Scott Pruitt's public comments expressing doubts about climate change science.

Smith, citing emails obtained by his committee, says Francesca Grifo, EPA's scientific integrity official, overwhelmingly favored environmental advocates when she invited 45 groups to an annual stakeholder meeting planned for next month.

Grifo in March was asked to look into the Sierra Club's complaint that Pruitt violated the agency's scientific integrity policy when he said during a TV appearance that that carbon dioxide is not the primary driver of global warming, a statement that contradicts the prevailing consensus among climate scientists.

A spokeswoman for Smith said Monday's letter about Grifo's meeting was not inspired by her inquiry into Pruitt and that Smith wants to promote a "diversity of voices" at Grifo's meeting.

The upcoming meeting, which is not directly related to Grifo's Pruitt probe, is for 45 representatives from select groups for Grifo to "answer your questions, share current scientific integrity initiatives, and discuss future plans for scientific integrity at EPA," according to an email from Grifo that Smith cites. The committee did not release the full emails it obtained but shared copies of the text of the email and invite list with POLITICO.

Smith calls on Pruitt to either invite more industry representatives to the meeting or open it to the public at large.

"Science does indeed provide the underpinnings for EPA's decision-making, and it is essential in gaining public trust and support that EPA's scientific integrity programs and activities be transparent and accessible to all with an interest in EPA actions," Smith and Rep. Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.) wrote in a letter to Pruitt on Monday.

EPA did not provide a comment on the record.

The list of invitees to the June 14 meeting include environmental groups like Earthjustice, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Union of Concerned Scientists, where Grifo worked prior to joining EPA in 2013. All those groups, Smith says, skew "decidedly toward pro-regulation environmental activism."

The list also included Christy Goldfuss, who ran the White House Council on Environmental Quality during Barack Obama's final years in office and has since returned to the Center for American Progress. Also invited were groups like the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, the Project on Government Oversight and the AFL-CIO, along with several journalism groups such as the Society of Environmental Journalists and Wisconsin Public Radio. The list also included was Demos, a liberal think tank connected to billionaire George Soros.

Grifo also invited the American Chemistry Council, an industry group that was closely involved in negotiations over the 2016 overhaul to the Toxic Substances Control Act. But aside from that group, she did not invite state-level officials or anyone "representing the views and interests of industries impacted by agency decisions underpinned by EPA's scientific programs," Smith and Biggs wrote.

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EPA watchdog examining Pruitt climate comments [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 03/31/2017 05:25 PM EDT

EPA's scientific integrity officer will look into a complaint about EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's [comment](#) earlier this month that carbon dioxide is not the primary driver of global warming.

In an email today to the Sierra Club, which made the complaint on March 14, an official in the EPA inspector general's office said the issue has been referred to EPA's scientific integrity official, Francesca Grifo. The inspector general typically does not wade into scientific disputes at the agency, and standard protocol is to refer such matters to Grifo for further investigation.

"The SIO will be reviewing your letter and determining best course of action," the OIG official wrote today in an email shared with POLITICO. "If after the SIO review, she concludes there is some aspect of the letter itself, or her findings or conclusions that she believes are appropriate for further consideration by the OIG, she will so notify the OIG."

"We're glad the independent and professional staff at the EPA are apparently taking steps to consider this serious issue and we're hopeful that this process ultimately causes Pruitt to correct the record and stop falsifying science, or, if he is incapable of accepting the scientific consensus on climate, to get out of the environmental protection business altogether," Sierra Club attorney Elena Saxonhouse said in a statement.

Before joining EPA in 2013, Grifo spent eight years at the Union of Concerned Scientists. She has a Ph.D. in botany from Cornell University.

Reuters first reported the letter today.

WHAT'S NEXT: Grifo will review Pruitt's comment and determine whether it violated EPA's scientific integrity policy.

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Pruitt to seek new EPA scientific advisers [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 05/04/2017 04:32 PM EDT

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is reopening the nomination process for outside scientific counselors to advise the agency on research and development, according to internal agency emails obtained by POLITICO.

In an email to staffers yesterday, Office of Policy chief Samantha Dravis said Pruitt would not be moving forward at this time with the reappointment of nine members of the [Board of Scientific Counselors](#) whose terms expired last week, and that political leaders "would like to re-open the nominations process." The board is a federal advisory committee currently made up of 18 members that provides advice and recommendations to EPA's Office of Research and Development. It has tackled issues ranging from methods for evaluating lead exposure to wildfire smoke risks in recent years.

The move comes as congressional Republicans have been pushing to alter the process by which science is overseen and used to inform regulations at EPA — changes that GOP lawmakers say would promote fairness and transparency, but that environmental groups argue would give more influence to industry.

EPA political leaders also opted to withdraw the agency program from consideration for a Harvard University Kennedy School of Government award. According to the emails, the [Federal Community of Practice on Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science](#), a program co-chaired by EPA to help government agencies with citizen science initiatives, is a finalist for the Innovations in American Government Awards. Pruitt needed to sign a form in order for the program to move forward in the competition, but Dravis informed staffers yesterday that "the Administrator will not be moving forward at this time" with the award.

Last week, EPA said it [removed](#) "outdated language" referring to Obama-era programs that President Donald Trump has targeted for elimination, including virtually all mentions of climate change.

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Top Senate tax aides still have basic questions about border adjustments [Back](#)

By Brian Faler | 05/22/2017 03:29 PM EDT

Lawmakers have been debating the House's border adjustment plan for months now, but some of the Senate's top tax aides say they still have basic questions about how it would work.

Mark Prater, a senior aide to Senate Finance Chairman [Orrin Hatch](#), said he still doesn't know how much money it would raise or how it would affect people at different income levels.

Prater said he doesn't know if it would be borne mainly by consumers or businesses, or paid partly by foreigners.

"I don't have an official score, I don't have distribution tables," he told a panel on tax reform today. Who would bear the burden of the tax is a "critical question" because the border

adjustment plan is "an obviously very material part of the plan."

His comments came as the House Ways and Means Committee is slated Tuesday to convene its first hearing on the plan.

Vic Fleischer, a top tax aide to Sen. [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore), complained Republicans are trying to write "a completely new tax system" behind "closed doors," adding that he wonders how the plan would treat partnerships and financial service firms.

"If there are answers to these questions — maybe there are — I'd like to see them sometime before the bill shows up for a vote," he told the panel.

Ahead of the Ways and Means hearing, the Joint Committee on Taxation released an informational [report](#) on border adjustment tax proposals.

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