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Subject: House EPA spending chair: Budget cuts are 'untenable'

By Alex Guillén

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Lawmakers from both parties made it clear at the outset of EPA's first appropriations hearing of the year that the White House's proposed \$2.4 billion cut to the agency won't fly.

House Interior-EPA spending panel Chairman Ken Calvert (R-Calif.) told EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt that the proposed budget is "untenable."

Calvert said the budget managed to cut programs important to every member of the spending subcommittee. He specifically noted cuts to a program that upgrades dirty diesel engines as key for his state of California, along with targeted air shed grants that were cut entirely from the budget, and a 31 percent reduction to Superfund clean-ups.

"These are all proposals we are unlikely to entertain," Calvert said. "This is perhaps not how you would personally craft EPA's budget, but it's the budget you have to defend here today."

The panel's top Democrat, Betty McCollum (D-Minn.) also had even harsher words for the budget proposal, which she said "would endanger the health of millions of Americans, jeopardize the quality of our air and water and wreak havoc on the economy." McCollum also slammed the proposed reduction of thousands of workers.

Calvert did praise the budget proposal for maintaining funding for key state water grants and the nascent Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program.

WHAT'S NEXT: Pruitt is facing questions today from the House spending subcommittee that will write EPA's fiscal 2018 spending bill later this summer.

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