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**Subject:** OTR - Backgrounder on Pruitt (20 minute coffee)

## **BACKGROUND BRIEF ON SCOTT PRUITT & THE EPA**

### **WHO IS SCOTT PRUITT ...**

**Scott Pruitt: Politics, baseball and Jesus.** “Politics, baseball and Jesus. That’s what Scott Pruitt and his friend and campaign manager Matt Pinnell talked about as they crisscrossed Oklahoma in 2006 trying to get Pruitt elected lieutenant governor. Politics, baseball and Jesus. With his energy and persistence, they have carried Pruitt to victory and nursed him through defeat. And they have him on the verge of running the agency many view as the embodiment of government regulation run amok, the Environmental Protection Agency.” (Tulsa World, 01/16/17)

**Scott Pruitt, outspoken and forceful, moves to the center of power within the Trump administration.** “Less than four months ago, Scott Pruitt arrived in Washington with few connections to President Trump’s inner circle and took the helm of an agency where many employees were openly hostile to him. But the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency has emerged as one of the most influential policy architects in the president’s Cabinet, a skilled and sometimes brash lawyer who is methodically taking apart a slew of regulations and agreements affecting a range of issues, from manufacturing operations to landfills.” (The Washington Post, 06/02/17)

**Scott Pruitt’s Back-to-Basics Agenda for the EPA.** “Republican presidents tend to nominate one of two types of administrator to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. The first is the centrist—think Christie Todd Whitman (2001-03)—who might be equally at home in a Democratic administration. The other is the fierce conservative—think Anne Gorsuch (1981-83)—who views the agency in a hostile light. Scott Pruitt, whom the Senate confirmed Friday, 52-46, doesn’t fit either mold. His focus is neither expanding nor reducing regulation. ‘There is no reason why EPA’s role should ebb or flow based on a particular administration, or a particular administrator,’ he says. ‘Agencies exist to administer the law. Congress passes statutes, and those statutes are very clear on the job EPA has to do. We’re going to do that job.’ You might call him an EPA originalist.” (The Wall Street Journal, 02/17/17)

### **RECENT RELEASES ...**

#### **EPA Prepares for Hurricane Irma**

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-prepares-hurricane-irma>

#### **EPA Approves Emergency Fuel Waivers for 38 States and Washington, D.C.**

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-approves-emergency-fuel-waivers-38-states-and-washington-dc-1>

#### **Regions 2 and 4 Taking Precautions, Activating Emergency Response Teams**

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/regions-2-and-4-taking-precautions-activating-emergency-response-teams>

## **EPA Securing Florida Superfund Sites Prior to Hurricane Irma**

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-securing-florida-superfund-sites-prior-hurricane-irma>

### **BACK-TO-BASICS AGENDA ...**

Press Release

April 20, 2017

<https://www.epa.gov/home/back-basics-agenda>

Administrator Pruitt's "Back-to-Basics Agenda" reflects his efforts to refocus EPA on its intended mission, return power to the states and create an environment where jobs can grow. The agenda focuses on the three E's:

- **E** Environment: Protecting the environment
- **E** Economy: Sensible regulations that allow economic growth
- **E** Engagement: Engaging with state and local partners.

Administrator Pruitt kicked off his "Back to Basics Agenda" on April 13 at the Harvey Mine in Sycamore, Pennsylvania. He spoke with coal miners about the president's recent Energy Independence Executive Order, which directs EPA and other federal agencies to review the Clean Power Plan and revise regulatory barriers that impede energy independence, including unnecessary burdens on coal miners and coal-fired electric utilities. ([Reuters](#), 07/12/17)

### **CLIMATE CHANGE ...**

REUTERS: The consensus has been overwhelming that climate change has been caused by human beings...

PRUITT: That's not the question. It is not a question about whether the climate is warming. It is not a question about whether human activity contributes to it. It is a question about how much we contribute to it? How do we measure that with precision? And by the way, are we on an unsustainable path? And what harm...is it causing an existential threat? ([Reuters](#), 07/12/17)

### **PARIS ACCORD ...**

REUTERS: On Paris and climate change, polls show younger people are more supportive of U.S leadership on climate change. How do you explain your decision to a younger generation?

PRUITT: That's not what Paris was about. I get what you're saying but here's the deal though. It was not about whether the U.S. is going to continue leading on reducing our CO2 footprint because Paris didn't actually do that. Paris was a bumper sticker. Go back and read the articles about the criticism that was levied on the environmental left. They were very critical and dismissive of the Paris agreement. You know why? Because China didn't have to do anything until 2030 and India conditioned all of their obligations upon receiving two and a half trillion dollars of aid. Russia, India and China contributed 0 dollars to the Green Climate Fund. People have short memories there. We are already at pre 94 levels and we exited Kyoto in 2001 and from 2000 to 2014 we reduced our CO2 foot print by 18 plus percent. That's better than others across the globe. When people really want action and meaningful outcomes with regards to this, we are doing it. We are at pre-1994 levels. Paris was not in my view – it shouldn't be symbolic or optical with respect to whether progress or no progress is being made in CO2 reduction. ([Reuters](#), 07/12/17)

#### **CLIMATE DENIER ...**

“Pruitt bristled at the phrase "climate denier," a description that his critics have often applied to him in light of his repeated statements disputing scientific conclusions about the large role humans play in warming the planet. ‘What does it even mean? That’s what I think about it. I deny the climate? Really? Wow, OK. That’s crazy, in my view,’ he said. Pruitt reiterated his position that the climate is warming and humans contribute to that, but "the ability to measure with precision the human contribution to warming is something that’s very challenging to do.” ([Politico](#), 07/12/17)

#### **PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION’S SO-CALLED ACCOMPLISHMENTS (FLINT & GOLD KING MINE) ...**

“The water crisis in Flint, which still affects thousands of that Michigan city’s residents, emerged in surprising ways at the hearing for EPA nominee and Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt. In his remarks opening the hearing, Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) cited Flint as an example of what Pruitt would need to fix — and what the Obama administration had wrought. ‘The regulatory zeal of the last eight years has violated a fundamental principle of environmental stewardship, which is ‘do no harm,’” said Barrasso. “This failed environmental leadership has contributed to two of the worst government-created environmental disasters in decades: the Gold King Mine spill, and Flint, Michigan’s water crisis.’ There was a shift in the usual poker-faced expressions of Democrats when Barrasso said that. The Gold King Mine spill was the direct fault of the EPA, which botched the handling of a wastewater study. But the Flint crisis, and the presence of lead in water that poisoned residents for a year, was created by a confluence of factors. In a 2016 report, the EPA took blame for not alerting the public about the problem with lead in the water, but said that it had done so out of a preponderance of caution.” ([The Washington Post](#), 01/18/17)

**Pruitt’s EPA awarded \$100 million to upgrade drinking water in Flint, Michigan.** “The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today awarded a \$100 million grant to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to fund drinking water infrastructure upgrades in Flint, Mich.” ([Press Release](#), 03/17/17)

**Pruitt’s EPA committed additional funds surround the Gold King Mine release, bringing**

**the total to \$29 million.** “The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has provided over \$90,000 in additional reimbursements to five entities in Colorado and Utah for their costs incurred responding to the August 5, 2015, Gold King Mine release.” ([Press Release](#), 03/16/17)

#### **WORKING WITH STATE & LOCAL LEADERS ...**

**In his first week, Pruitt met with 18 Governors.** “In his first week on the job as EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt has now met with 18 Governors and Lieutenant Governors, putting into action his promise of an open door policy and a new beginning of partnership with the states.” ([Press Release](#), 02/26/17)

**EPA Administrator Pruitt met with the U.S. Conference of Mayors.** “U.S. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt will deliver remarks to the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Leadership Meeting tomorrow to discuss agency priorities under the Trump Administration.” ([Press Release](#), 03/01/17)

**Administrator Scott Pruitt sent letters to state governors advising them that they are under no obligation to adhere to the Clean Power Plan rule.** “The days of coercive federalism are over,” the letter reads. “Accordingly, I look forward to working with you, your state experts and local communities as we develop a path forward to improve our environment and bolster the economy in a manner that is respectful of and consistent with the rule of law.” ([Press Release](#), 03/30/17)

#### **WORKING WITH PRESIDENT TRUMP ON ROLLING BACK OBAMA’S AGENDA ...**

**An executive order was issued to rescind WOTUS.** “President Trump and EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt issued an executive order to rescind or revise the 2015 Clean Water Rule: Definition of ‘Waters of the United States.’” ([Press Release](#), 02/28/17)

**An executive order was issued to rescind the so-called Clean Power Plan.** “Today, at the Environmental Protection Agency surrounded by American energy workers, public employees and members of Congress, President Donald Trump signed the Energy Independence Executive Order to protect thousands of jobs and strengthen energy security, while also ensuring that our policies provide clean air and clean water for all of our citizens.” ([Press Release](#), 03/28/17)

#### **EXAMINING COSTLY REGULATIONS ...**

**EPA to reexamine emission standards for cars and light duty trucks.** “‘These standards are costly for automakers and the American people,’ said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. ‘We will work with our partners at DOT to take a fresh look to determine if this approach is realistic. This thorough review will help ensure that this national program is good for consumers and good for the environment.’” ([Press Release](#), 03/15/17)

**EPA Administrator seeks additional time to review RMP Rule.** “Administrator Scott Pruitt signed a proposed rule this week to further delay the effective date of EPA’s Risk Management Program (RMP) Amendments to allow EPA time to complete the process for reconsidering the RMP Amendments issued on January 17, 2017.” ([Press Release](#), 03/31/17)

**EPA extended the comment period on the Hard Rock Mining proposed rule that could cost**

**businesses \$171 million annually.** “The Environmental Protection Agency today issued a 120-day extension of the comment period related to proposed financial responsibility requirements for the hard rock mining industry. The Agency has received dozens of requests to extend the comment period. EPA estimates predict the implementation of these requirements would cost American businesses up to \$171 million a year.” ([Press Release](#), 02/24/17)

#### **CLEANING UP THE ENVIRONMENT ...**

**The EPA kicks-off cleanup at the West Oakland Superfund site.** “[The EPA] joined local leaders and community members in Oakland to celebrate the installation and start-up of a new groundwater and soil treatment system at the AMCO Chemical Superfund Site.” ([Press Release](#), 03/18/17)

**The EPA will resume cleanup at the East Chicago Superfund site.** “The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is preparing to resume cleanup work in zones 2 and 3 of the USS Lead Superfund site in East Chicago in April. EPA has reached an agreement with several potentially responsible parties to fund part of this work valued at an estimated \$16 million -- in addition to the \$26 million already secured for work under a 2014 consent decree.” ([Press Release](#), 03/20/17)

**EPA set to oversee second phase of \$43 million cleanup of Pompton Lake.** “The second phase of Pompton Lake cleanup will begin this spring and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is holding a public session to discuss that work.” ([Press Release](#), 03/28/17)

#### **ALLOCATING FUNDS FOR VITAL PROJECTS ...**

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**EPA awards \$380,000 to Diné College for abandoned uranium mine study in Arizona.** ([Press Release](#), 02/28/17)

**EPA Awards \$1.09 million DERA Grant to Gees Bend Ferry in Alabama.** Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded a \$1.09 million Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grant to the historic Gees Bend Ferry in Wilcox County, AL. ... The DERA award will provide partial funding to replace the current diesel-powered ferry with a 100% electric ferry. This will be the first zero-emission passenger/vehicle ferry of its type in the United States, and only the second of its kind in the world. ([Press Release](#), 02/24/17)

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