

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
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Subject: EPA science board chairwoman 'concerned' about lack of members

By Annie Snider

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The chairwoman of the EPA scientific advisory board that has been targeted by the Trump administration said she is concerned about the board's ability to function with so few members.

Deborah Swackhamer, chair of EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors and a University of Minnesota professor, told the House Science Committee's environment panel that her board is down to just five members since EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt declined to renominate nine of the board's 18 members. Four members have rotated off after their second terms and two subcommittee members also resigned in protest.

"I'm obviously concerned. My committee is no longer populated. I'm anxious that it gets repopulated as quickly as possible," she said.

An EPA spokesman has said the agency is reopening the nomination process and indicated Pruitt is looking to increase industry voices on the panel.

Rep. Brian Babin (R-Texas) defended the move, arguing there was no reason to "rubber stamp" renominations when there is a pool of other interested scientists, and he questioned why "such an open and honest process" would be an issue.

But the panel's Democrats argued the move is part of a pattern of trying to undermine science, including by removing references to climate change from agency websites and deciding not to ban the pesticide chlorpyrifos despite the recommendation of EPA's scientists.

"I'm concerned that today the Trump administration is attempting to silence federal scientists and offer alternative facts rather than scientific evidence," said the panel's top Democrat, Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas).

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