

## **Opening**

- Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the 700,000 federal and D.C. government employees represented by the American Federation of Government Employees, including over 4,000 AFGE members who live and work in Minnesota.

## **EPA Funding and Staffing**

- AFGE represents employees at the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, all of which are funded through the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee.
- Our EPA members protect human health and the environment, and specifically have been responsible for the clean-up of superfund sites and contaminated soil here in Minnesota and across the Great Lakes region.
- AFGE is deeply concerned that the Administration has proposed to cut the EPA budget by 27% in its FY 2021 budget request.
- We urge Congress to fund EPA at \$11.2 Billion and at a staffing level of 18,000 FTEs to ensure EPA workers can protect human health and the environment, to prevent any further closures and relocations of EPA laboratories.
- Staffing has dropped in all offices, from the regional offices that perform oversight, enforcement and direct implementation of environmental protection initiatives; to labs that have moved or closed altogether; to program offices across the country where staffers chose to leave because they were tired of the disrespect and frequent unnecessary disruptions to their work.
- Thank you Chairwoman McCollum for your leadership in passing the FY 2020 Interior and Environment Appropriations bill in the House that funded the EPA at \$3.42 billion above the Administration's request. Ultimately, Congress funded EPA at \$9.057 billion in the final funding agreement. EPA needs an additional 10,000 employees and robust funding to perform the mission of the agency and protect human health and the environment. We

strongly urge your subcommittee to fund EPA at \$11.2 Billion in the FY 2021 budget.

### **EPA Laboratory Closures**

- EPA is concerned by the recent relocation and closure of EPA laboratories and calls on Congress to include report language that prevents EPA from closing further EPA laboratories.

### **EPA Collective Bargaining Agreement**

- AFGE also thanks you, Chairwoman McCollum for your support of AFGE members at EPA in a letter sent to Administrator Andrew Wheeler demanding he return to the bargaining table with EPA workers. This letter played a critical role in getting the Agency back to negotiations with AFGE that began on January 8, 2020. Now that AFGE is back at the bargaining table, AFGE needs your support and congressional oversight more than ever. As AFGE continues to lose dedicated public servants at EPA, we're asking for you to stand with us as we work for a fair contract for all EPA workers. We have developed an EPA Workers' Bill of Rights that we expect to be reflected in a new contract. The Bill of Rights sets forth the shared values of EPA employees and what we need to accomplish our mission of protecting human health and the environment.

### **National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities Funding**

- NEA and NEH employees perform important services to the American public providing access to the arts through grants, including here in Minnesota where they have funded important arts and humanities organizations including the Lakes Area Music Festival, Saint John's University, Stages Theatre Company, Ananya Dance, Illusion Theater, Ragamala Dance, and the Anderson Center in Red Wing which are some of the recipients of NEA and NEH grants.
- The Administration proposed eliminating both agencies in its FY 2021 budget request.
- AFGE strongly urges Congress to fully fund NEA and NEH so that both agencies can provide arts and humanities education and access to the American public.

**Closing**

AFGE thanks the Chairwoman for holding this hearing and supporting AFGE members and federal workers here in Minnesota and across the country. AFGE looks forward to working with you on these important issues.