



Proposed Cuts to EPA Threaten Americans' Health: NRDC Congressional Outreach Partnership

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Objectives

The not-for-profit resource organization Public Health Foundation identifies core competencies for public health professionals. This project seeks to demonstrate excellence in the following competencies:

- 2C10. Influences policies, programs, and services external to the organization that affect the health of the community
- 5C10. Defends policies, programs, and resources that improve health (e.g., using evidence to demonstrate the need for a program, communicating the impact of a program).
- 6C7. Ensures the use of evidence in developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving policies, programs, and services.

The specific aim of the project is to advocate for maintaining the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) funding by educating Congress about the health consequences of eliminating EPA programs.

Background

In March 2017, the White House released the 2018 budget proposal detailing many of the changes the president wants to make in federal spending. The proposal would decrease the EPA's budget by 31% from its current levels, bringing the agency back to inflation-adjusted levels similar to those of the agency's initial stages in the 1970's.

A bi-partisan coalition of retired EPA employees responded as the newly-formed Environmental Protection Network with a 51 page analysis of the impact of proposed budget cuts. The analysis shows significant damage to Americans' health would likely results from loss of key protective programs. Among them are:

- The Endocrine Disruptors Screening Program would be eliminated, halting work to the testing chemicals that can interfere with reproduction, growth and development.
- The radon program would be cut by more than 80 percent. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer and accounts for approximately 21,000 deaths each year.
- Funding for the Chemical Risk Review and Reduction program would be decreased more than 21%. This would interfere with a new federal law to expand safety testing.

Intervention

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is a non-profit organization founded in 1970 by a group of law students and attorneys at the forefront of the environmental movement. The organization strives to ensure the rights of all people to clean air, clean water, and healthy communities. NRDC works towards these goals through research, advocacy and litigation. Research experts examine critical environmental challenges and identify the most effective solutions. NRDC's advocates work at every level to persuade decision makers to adopt innovative solutions. NRDC helped pass the nation's core environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. When warranted, NRDC attorneys litigate with powerful corporations and government entities, arguing all the way to the Supreme Court to ensure that environmental laws are enforced.



Throughout the last academic year, meetings took place to discuss the target audience, aims, scope, strategy and timeline of the advocacy effort to maintenance of the EPA's funding. A draft outline and timeline were set. Research into the health implications of proposed EPA budget cuts was completed. Affected community members and professionals working in environmental health were interviewed. Their first-hand accounts of the hazards of environmental exposures, along with the estimates of increased morbidity and mortality that may be expected if EPA budget cuts go through, were compiled into a two page Congressional Fact Sheet. The fact sheet is currently in draft format, and under review.

Next Steps

The draft Congressional Fact Sheet is currently undergoing internal review at the NRDC. Following any revisions, the Congressional Fact Sheet will be distributed to NRDC national and regional offices. The regional offices will use the Congressional Fact Sheet to educate law makers during their return to home states over holiday recess. The national office will arrange advocacy visits to Capitol Hill and utilize the Fact Sheet to educate policy makers and staff in Washington D.C.

References

References:

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