

Sen. Susan Collins
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Rep. Tom Cole
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

Sen. Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment & Related
Agencies

Rep. Mike Simpson
Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment & Related
Agencies

Sen. Patty Murray
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on
Appropriations

Rep. Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Appropriations

Sen. Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
& Related Agencies

Rep. Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment
& Related Agencies

March 6, 2026

Please Prevent EPA from Reprogramming Appropriated Funds and Closing the Office of Research and Development (ORD)

Dear Chairs Collins, Murkowski, Cole and Simpson, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Members Merkley, DeLauro and Pingree,

On behalf of the 86 undersigned health, environmental and public interest organizations and individuals, we urge you to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from reprogramming portions of the science and technology funding appropriated by Congress for FY2026, which the Agency is attempting in order to close the Office of Research and Development (ORD) and reassign its staff to other offices.

ORD is a trusted source of world-class research that has been a critical part of the agency from the start and is essential for EPA to fulfill its mission. Under the terms of the most recent appropriations [legislation](#) EPA may not conduct this reprogramming and eliminate ORD. We ask you to disapprove EPA's proposal, and direct EPA to immediately halt the closure of ORD and report publicly on the status of duties and functions of all research programs and laboratories.

Background

On February 13, 2026, the EPA sent a [notice](#) to Congress stating it will eliminate ORD and reallocate appropriated resources into other Agency programs. On that same day, the Agency [notified](#) the 132 remaining ORD staff – down from 1500 scientists, researchers, and other staff as of January 2025— via email that each will receive an individual notice in March 2026 with details of their reassignment.

EPA's proposed actions are subject to the requirements of the *Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment*

Appropriations Act, 2026 (Public Law 119-74), which appropriated funds for ORD's staff and functions. The Act also prohibits the Agency from reprogramming as it proposes to do. Therefore, the Committees should take action conveying disapproval. EPA may not carry out this harmful and unnecessary action to reprogram funds, reassign or remove ORD staff, or eliminate ORD, as explained below.

- The Act appropriates \$744.195 million for Science & Technology, **including ORD programs and functions.**
- **ORD research has contributed to major scientific milestones on health for decades¹ and is essential for EPA to carry out its statutory duties and core functions.** Many of the country's bedrock environmental laws contain language requiring EPA to use the "latest scientific knowledge" or "best available science" in decision-making to protect health.² Fulfilling these mandates requires the kind of fundamental, long-term research that ORD performs.
- **ORD manages, coordinates and executes a program of research and development to serve the needs of EPA programs, regional offices, the public, and Agency partners.** In addition to serving EPA's research needs, ORD research is also relied on by State, Tribal and local agencies to protect the health of their communities and by the public to have access to current information about chemicals in local homes, schools, and neighborhoods.
- **ORD performs Congressionally mandated research** into the health effects of air and water pollution (42 U.S.C. 7403 and 33 U.S.C. 1254, respectively), and perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances—known as PFAS or "forever chemicals" (15 U.S.C. 8962), among other areas of scientific inquiry.
- **Public Law 119-74 requires EPA to "maintain staffing levels in order to fulfill the mission and statutory obligations of the agency,** including Section 2(f) of the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 4363),"³ which requires **"a separately identified program of continuing, long-term environmental research and development"**⁴ [*emphasis added*].
- **ORD conducts the long-term environmental research and development program required by 42 U.S.C. 4363.** EPA has no other office or program capable of performing this function. The new office EPA launched during the government shutdown—the Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions (**OASES**)—will be a much smaller office inside the Office of the Administrator that is focused on "practical, solution-oriented projects

¹ U.S. EPA. Research Milestones. <https://www.epa.gov/research-milestones>

² For example, 33 U.S.C. § 1314(a)(1); 42 U.S.C. § 7408(a)(2); 42 U.S.C. § 300g-1; and 15 U.S.C. § 2625(h).

³ Public Law 119-74 Div. C Title II.

⁴ 42 U.S.C. 4363; (Pub. L. 96-569, § 2(f), Dec. 22, 1980, 94 Stat. 3337; see also § 2(a) (listing required research categories)).

that align directly with the immediate needs, goals, and requirements of EPA program and regional offices.”⁵ This short-term focus on other offices and their goals falls well short of the continuing, long-term environmental research and development program Congress mandated to serve the public interest in reliable scientific research in specific areas, across administrations.

- **EPA’s proposed actions meet the definition of reprogramming under Public Law 119-74 and should be disapproved. For purposes of Public Law 119-74, the definition of reprogramming includes the elimination of a program, project or activity, the relocation of an office or employees, the reorganization or renaming of an office, program or activity, among other actions.**⁶

- The [Explanatory Statement](#) accompanying this law further states that a reprogramming “includes the reallocation of funds from one budget activity, budget line-item, or program area to another within any appropriation funded in this Act”.⁷

Furthermore, reprogramming

“includes all proposed reorganizations or other workforce actions detailed below which affect a total of 10 staff members or 10 percent of the staffing of an affected program or office, whichever is less, even without a change in funding”.⁸

The Explanatory Statement further notes that

“such reprogramming guidelines apply to proposed reorganizations, workforce restructure, reshaping, transfer of functions. or bureau-wide downsizing and include closures, consolidations, and relocations of offices, facilities, and laboratories.”⁹

- **EPA has not provided any information showing how its proposal to eliminate ORD could satisfy all applicable legal requirements, when ORD is vital to fulfill the agency’s mission and statutory obligations. EPA has come nowhere close to demonstrating an “unforeseen situation” and “actual loss or damage” requirements in the *General Guidelines for Reprogramming*, which state:**

“A reprogramming should be made only when an unforeseen situation arises, and then only if postponement of the project or the activity until the next appropriation year would result in actual loss or damage.”¹⁰

- **EPA has not sought any public input, considered any reliance interests of the public, states, or Tribes, or justified the loss of ORD’s research nationwide. It also**

⁵ U.S. EPA. About the Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions. November 13, 2025. <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-applied-science-and-environmental-solutions>

⁶ Pub. Law No. 119-74 Section 4, 421, 505, Title IV.

⁷ [Explanatory Statement](#), p.7.

⁸ *Id.* p. 8.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* p. 9.

has not been transparent with Congress or the public concerning how research programs and facilities will be affected by the closure of ORD, how it plans to reallocate resources (and what resources), or how the Agency's ability to perform its statutory functions will be impacted. The agency has provided no information to the public on the status or work of its research duties and programs, including how or if the agency is running any of ORD's laboratories, when there has been nearly a 90% loss of ORD staff since January 2025.

ORD's essential role

Your support for ORD will preserve a source of scientific advancement and innovation that furthers our security and the health of all Americans. ORD scientists provide the best available science that EPA requires to carry out the functions that Congress has mandated in law. ORD is essential for EPA to perform its duties.

We respectfully urge you to express your disapproval for EPA's proposed reprogramming of funds, including the reassignment or removal of ORD staff or the closure of this critical office.

Sincerely,

Able Differently

Air Alliance Houston

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

American Academy of Pediatrics

American College of Physicians

American Lung Association

American Sustainable Business Network (ASBN)

Breast Cancer Prevention Partners

California Safe Schools

Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund'

Center for Environmental Health

Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper, inc.

Clean Air Council

Clean Water Action

Climate Psychiatry Alliance

Collaborative for Health and Environment (CHE)

Coming Clean

Comunidades Aliadas Tomando Accion (CATA)

Earthjustice Action

Environmental Protection Network
Family Farm Defenders
Farmworker Association of Florida
Friends of the Earth
GASP
Government Information Watch
Green Science Policy Institute
Greenpeace USA
Informed Green Solutions Inc.
Learning Disabilities Association of Alabama
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois
Learning Disabilities Association of Maine
Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan
Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota
Learning Disabilities Association of New Hampshire
Learning Disabilities Association of New Jersey
Learning Disabilities Association of New York
Learning Disabilities Association of Ohio
Learning Disabilities Association of Oklahoma
Learning Disabilities Association of South Carolina
Learning Disabilities Association of Utah
Learning Disabilities Association of Virginia
Learning Disabilities Association of Wisconsin
Maryland Pesticide Education Network
Medical Students for a Sustainable Future (MS4SF)
Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Moms Clean Air Force
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Environmental Health Association
National Medical Association
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
OUCH-Int'l

Pesticide Action & Agroecology Network (PAN)
RISE St. James Louisiana
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
Save Lake Superior Association
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Science and Environmental Health Network
Society for Conservation Biology North America (SCBNA)
Solutions for Environmental and Worker Health Justice
Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services
The Center for Progressive Reform
The Environmental Health Leadership Foundation
Toxic Free NC
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