

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 25, 2026

The Honorable Douglas Troutman
Assistant Administrator
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution
Prevention
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dr. Nancy Beck
Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution
Prevention
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dr. Lynn Dekleva
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution
Prevention
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Mr. Kyle Kunkler
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution
Prevention
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Troutman, Dr. Beck, Dr. Dekleva, and Mr. Kunkler:

We write today to express our concern regarding the ending of the recusal periods that were placed on you as political appointees managing the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP), the office responsible for keeping Americans safe from toxic chemicals. Because each of you has previously worked or advocated for companies that directly benefit from your office's efforts to roll back public health standards for chemicals, we urge each you to permanently extend your recusals and refrain from any contact or communication with any of your former employers or clients in order to prevent undue corporate influence on EPA's decision-making and ensure that EPA's regulatory standards for chemicals and pesticides serve the public interest.

Federal law generally prohibits political appointees from participating in specific executive administration manners, such as grants, contracts, litigations, enforcement actions, registrations, permits, or investigations, with their former employers and clients during their recusal periods.¹ These recusal periods are essential for insulating agencies from private interests that might benefit financially from decisions made by senior officials who were formerly employed by or affiliated with these interests. Even beyond recusal periods and the types of activities recusals do not prohibit, like policy decisions of general applicability, past administrations have encouraged political appointees to avoid contacting past employers or clients throughout their time in government service. Indeed, the previous administration required all political appointees to sign an ethics pledge that went beyond minimum statutory requirements, but the current

¹ 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502

administration terminated this pledge.^{2 3} Such restrictions serve as a bulwark against impropriety and give credence to the notion that the federal government is meant to serve the American taxpayer rather than corporate interests.

Making your recusal periods permanent is necessary because of the deep ties each of you has to the chemical industry. Dr. Beck is a former American Chemistry Council executive and previously lobbied for dozens of companies, including the American Petroleum Institute, the Olin Corporation, Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., and Syngenta.⁴ Her recusal periods with many of these companies ended throughout the past year. Dr. Dekleva served as a senior director at the American Chemistry Council before joining OSCPP. Her recusal ended in January 2026.⁵

Your actions during your tenure thus far have demonstrated the dangers of conflicts of interest and have unfortunately affirmed many of the ethics concerns that we have regarding your appointments. The American Chemistry Council, the former employer of both Dr. Beck and Dr. Dekleva, has advocated for years to roll back public health risk assessments for formaldehyde, a known carcinogen.⁶ In December 2025, EPA did in fact revise its assessment, nearly doubling the amount of formaldehyde it previously considered to be safe for exposure.⁷

Further, Mr. Kunkler, who leads OCSPP's Office of Pesticide Programs, is a former lobbyist for the American Soybean Association, which has advocated for the reinstatement of the pesticide dicamba.⁸ In 2024, a federal court blocked the registration and use of dicamba because EPA failed to properly consider public comments during the first Trump administration, when Dr. Beck and Dr. Dekleva previously worked in OCSPP. On February 6, 2026, EPA announced that the Office of Pesticide Programs under Mr. Kunkler had re-registered dicamba, despite legal challenges, risks to public health, and known damaging effects to neighboring crops.^{9 10} Studies have linked dicamba exposure to liver and bile duct cancer and leukemia.¹¹

The end of your recusal periods will only exacerbate these conflicts of interest. Further, because you have secured ethics waivers and permission to engage in certain regulatory processes that involve your former employers and clients, it is clear that a permanent extension of recusal periods is necessary but not sufficient to prevent industry regulatory capture of EPA. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) records released in September 2025 reveal that OCSPP appointees accepted meetings with representatives from at least 50 industry associations and chemical and pesticide companies just between February and May 2025.¹² Strikingly, these FOIA documents reveal calendars devoid of meetings with public health or environmental organizations.

² <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/25/2021-01762/ethics-commitments-by-executive-branch-personnel>

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/initial-rescissions-of-harmful-executive-orders-and-actions/>

⁴ EPA Recusal Statement, Nancy Beck, June 10, 2025

⁵ EPA Recusal Statement, Lynn Dekleva, April 24, 2025

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/26/climate/epa-lynn-dekleva-formaldehyde.html>

⁷ EPA-HQ-OPPT-2018-0438-0240

⁸ EPA Recusal Statement, Kyle Kunkler, August 20, 2025

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/06/climate/epa-dicamba-drifting-herbicide-approval.html>

¹⁰ EPA-HQ-OPP-2024-0154-3440

¹¹ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7660157/>

¹² <https://www.thenewlede.org/2025/09/epa-industry-influence/>

Finally, the troubling legacy of OCSPP leadership during the first Trump administration—which included Dr. Beck and Dr. Dekleva—further buttresses our concerns and underscores the need for strong ethical commitments. In 2024, the EPA Inspector General released reports that found numerous instances of retaliation and unhealthy management pressure in the chemicals office during the first Trump administration that led to at least five whistleblower complaints and many experts leaving OCSPP.¹³ EPA scientists who worked in the chemicals office during the first Trump administration said they were pressured to downplay the harms of chemicals to get them approved faster.

For all these reasons, we ask that each of you commit to the following and provide a response by April 8, 2026:

1. Will you commit to permanently extending your recusal periods?
2. Will you commit to forswearing all contact with any former employers or clients who may have an interest in EPA's chemical regulatory decisions?
3. Will you commit to recusing yourself from rulemaking procedures that involve chemicals in which your former employers or clients have an interest?

Thank you for your consideration of these requests to ensure that EPA is serving the American people instead of private corporate interests. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

¹³ <https://www.epa.gov/office-inspector-general/report-investigation-whistleblower-reprisal-investigation-24-n-0061>