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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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Lobbyist helped set up costly Pruitt trip

Longtime friend of EPA chief would later net a contract with Morocco

**BY KEVIN SULLIVAN,
JULIET EILPERIN
AND BRADY DENNIS**

MARRAKESH, MOROCCO — A controversial trip to Morocco by Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt last December was partly arranged by a longtime friend and lobbyist, who accompanied Pruitt and his entourage at multiple stops and served as an informal liaison at both official and social events during the visit.

Richard Smotkin, a former Comcast lobbyist who has known the EPA administrator for years, worked for months with Pruitt's aides to hammer out logistics, according to four people familiar with those preparations. In April, Smotkin won a \$40,000-a-month contract, retroactive to Jan. 1, with the Moroccan government to promote the kingdom's cultural and economic interests. He recently registered as a foreign agent representing that government.

The four-day journey has drawn scrutiny from lawmakers and the EPA's inspector general, who is investigating its high costs and whether it adhered to the agency's mission to "protect human health and the environment."

Information obtained by The Washington Post shows the visit's cost exceeded \$100,000, more than twice what has been previously reported — including \$16,217 for Pruitt's Delta Air Lines fare and \$494 for him to spend one night at a luxury hotel in Paris. He was accompanied by eight staffers and his round-the-clock security detail.



ANDREW HARNIK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt's Morocco trip cost more than \$100,000, documents show.

Lobbyist's role in Pruitt's Morocco trip raises ethics issues

Smotkin's role in arranging the whirlwind visit raises many questions. Federal laws prohibit public officials from using government resources to financially ben-

efit friends, relatives or other people with whom they have personal connections.

Smotkin did not return calls and emails seeking comment about his role in



PHOTOS BY KEVIN SULLIVAN/THE WASHINGTON POST



The Sofitel Marrakesh Palais Imperial hotel, above, part of a French luxury chain, offers deluxe accommodations and perks such as champagne and strawberries, left, at its lunch buffet. Environmental Protection Agency chief Scott Pruitt stayed in at least two Sofitels during his trip to Morocco.

the trip or his relationship with Pruitt.

Pruitt faces inquiries about his spending, ethics and management decisions, including his first-class travels and a \$50-a-night condo rental from a Washington lobbyist. The Morocco trip has drawn special attention for its expense and purpose.

For months, many aspects of the journey have stayed secret, particularly the highly unusual role of Smotkin. These previously unreported details underscore lawmakers' questions about whether the trip was in keeping with Pruitt's role as the nation's top environmental official.

The EPA has insisted that the trip was a legitimate effort to nail down details of a bilateral trade agreement, and the agency said Monday that Pruitt was unaware of the depth of Smotkin's business relationship with the Moroccan government.

Ethics experts note that it is highly unusual for someone outside the U.S. government to help arrange such travel details for the head of a federal agency. Larry Noble, senior director and general counsel at the Campaign Legal Center, said Tuesday that the lobbyist's involvement raises issues about whether Pruitt went to Morocco partly to bolster Smotkin's standing within the kingdom.

"It shows, at the very least, a tremendous amount of sloppiness, and it raises ethical issues about the relationship between Smotkin and Pruitt," Noble said. "If Pruitt did this to benefit Smotkin and did this to show that Smotkin has an in with the EPA administrator, then he's

using his official office to benefit a private person."

Even as some elements of the trip remain unclear, EPA officials confirmed that Smotkin brokered Pruitt's initial meeting with Morocco's ambassador in Washington, when she extended an invitation to travel to her country. Smotkin also accompanied Pruitt at multiple stops during his visit, the EPA and others confirmed.

Unlike most Cabinet-level travel, for which the agenda and policy outcomes are finalized weeks in advance, Pruitt's office changed the schedule even while he was there, according to several people familiar with the visit. Though the EPA chief did visit a solar power research installation, he canceled a public appearance with an energy efficiency expert at an international conference in Marrakesh and instead met with the chairman of a large phosphate exporter.

Smotkin attended both the visit to the Green Energy Park and the meeting with the phosphate executive. He also joined Pruitt for dinner on the EPA chief's final night in Marrakesh, the EPA confirmed.

The reasons behind the trip came up again last week in Washington when Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) grilled Pruitt during the second of two contentious House hearings. She pressed him on why the EPA trumpeted the fact that part of his time was spent promoting the benefits of U.S. liquefied natural gas imports for Morocco's economy.

"I can't, for the life of me, imagine why

an EPA administrator would be over there promoting energy sales,” Pingree said. “We have a Department of Energy. You should be thinking much more about some of the challenges with [liquefied natural gas], and why you would be on the other side.”

“There’s a free-trade agreement,” Pruitt replied. “The ambassador of Morocco actually met with me in advance of a free-trade agreement that was being negotiated and being completed in February of this year. We were there in December to negotiate the environmental chapter. That was the focus of the trip. There was a lot of reference made to [liquefied natural gas] only because the ambassador asked me to share that with the individuals when I was in country.”

The accord that Pruitt said was finalized in February actually remains unfinished. It is slated to be done this month.

This account of his Morocco visit is based on federal records, as well as interviews with government officials and members of the private sector in both countries. Most spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the questions being raised. The Paris-based publication Africa Intelligence recently reported on some elements of the trip.

Multiple administration officials say Pruitt had raised the prospect of going to Morocco well before he received a formal invitation from its ambassador to the United States, Princess Lalla Joumala Alaoui, during a meeting at EPA headquarters in late October — a meeting EPA

spokesman Jahan Wilcox acknowledged that Smotkin “assisted in arranging.”

Smotkin worked with two of Pruitt’s top aides, senior counsel Sarah Greenwalt and then-deputy advance director Milan Hupp, to line up specific aspects of the agenda, according to four people familiar with the process, all of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the agency’s internal workings.

For example, Smotkin discussed the prospect of Pruitt speaking at the Atlantic Dialogues, a conference in Marrakesh underwritten by the OCP Policy Center, the think-tank arm of a major phosphate export firm in Morocco. Pruitt later canceled his appearance.

Some of this scheduling activity took place before the meeting with Morocco’s ambassador, these people said. At the time, Pruitt indicated he had been invited by Prince Moulay Rachid, the king’s brother. During the subsequent planning, people familiar with the discussions said, Pruitt repeatedly expressed interest in how the trip could help advance American natural gas interests.

Moroccan officials, who are hoping to establish a terminal that could ship imported liquefied natural gas to the country’s power plants, announced two weeks before Pruitt’s arrival that they would be soliciting bids in 2018. That imported gas could help power a number of operations, including Morocco’s phosphate industry.

Asked about the visit, the Moroccan Embassy in Washington released a state-

ment Monday: “All meetings during this working visit were organized through official diplomatic channels with the objective to explore ways and means to deepen and broaden our bilateral work, namely in support of the Kingdom’s various initiatives to protect the environment, reduce Morocco’s carbon footprint and promote sustainable development.”

Separately, the EPA said in a statement that its “Office of International and Tribal Affairs organized and led the effort around Administrator Pruitt’s official meetings with the Moroccan government.”

Comcast spokeswoman Sena Fitzmaurice said that Smotkin, who had served as the company’s liaison to state attorneys general, left that position in July. He has known Pruitt for roughly a decade, she said.

Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act reference repeated contact, including texts, between the two men during the early days of the Trump administration. Pruitt’s calendar also shows that they ate together just days after he was sworn into office, and officials familiar with his schedule say they dined together on multiple occasions last year.

Weeks after Pruitt’s confirmation, Smotkin also orchestrated for Pruitt to meet personally with former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper. In an exchange first reported by HuffPost, Smotkin emailed one of the administrator’s schedulers to bring the two men together.

“Hi there. Been texting w the boss,”

Smotkin wrote to Sydney Hupp. “What times would be best on Monday to make this happen?”

“Hey Rick, you already spoke with Admin. Pruitt about this? Looking at Monday now ... Thanks!” replied Hupp, whose sister Millan now directs scheduling and advance for the EPA.

That brief “meet and greet” at EPA headquarters pales in comparison with Pruitt’s trip to Morocco, notable in part for his costly premium-class airfare and his stays in at least two Sofitels, part of the French-owned luxury chain.

The actual journey was beset by logistical problems. His entourage’s flight from Dulles International Airport was plagued by weather delays, prompting him, his aides and security agents to miss their connecting flight and stay overnight in Paris. Pruitt and a handful of aides instead went into Paris to spend the night in a \$494-a-night hotel.

Pruitt’s late arrival in Rabat caused him to miss a scheduled U.S. Embassy briefing and roundtable there. The discussion focused on how American firms were pioneering technological innovation in Morocco and could benefit from an increased natural gas supply — an event Wilcox said that Smotkin also attended. The administrator had a single meeting after arriving on Dec. 11, according to his public schedule, with the chief executive of the Moroccan Agency of Sustainable Energy. A spokesman for Mustapha Bakkoury said he was not available for an

interview and did not reply to a request that he confirm that the businessman met with Pruitt.

That evening, Pruitt and his staffers stayed at the Sofitel Rabat Jardin des Roses. His accompanying protective detail made an impression on some hotel staffers, with one employee recognizing Pruitt and an aide right away when shown photos last weekend.

“They were here in December,” she said. “They had lots of security with them. They were unapproachable.”

The EPA said in a statement that Smotkin “did not attend or participate in any official meetings with the Moroccan government,” but people familiar with the visit said he was a near-constant presence there. According to two individuals, he communicated with Isam Taib, political counselor to the Moroccan Embassy in Washington. Taib not only traveled back to his home country for Pruitt’s arrival but also signed the official contract retaining Smotkin’s public relations services.

Top Moroccan government officials were unwilling to discuss their dealings with Pruitt.

On a visit last week to Rabat by a Washington Post reporter, several officials who met with him would not acknowledge doing so — despite photos that the EPA itself published from some of those sessions.

Pruitt’s public schedule lists back-to-back appointments on the morning of Dec. 12 with Mounia Boucetta, a top official in the foreign ministry; Aziz Rabbah,

the minister of energy, mines and sustainable development; and Justice Minister Mohamed Aujjar.

Reached on his cellphone, Aujjar was asked about his meeting with Pruitt. He said “Who?” three times as the reporter repeated Pruitt’s name, then referred questions to his spokeswoman, who did not answer repeated requests for confirmation of the two men’s meeting.

Boucetta and her spokesman did not respond to repeated requests for confirmation of her meeting with Pruitt. Rabbah’s spokeswoman initially said he would do an in-person interview, then a few hours later said he was no longer available. She later would not confirm that meeting because she said his schedule was “confidential.”

One of only two Moroccan officials to meet with Pruitt and acknowledge that to The Post was Said Mouline, chief executive of the Moroccan Agency for Energy Efficiency. He said that officials at the OCP Policy Center asked him to meet with Pruitt. Smotkin also was listed as a participant at the event.

Mouline and Pruitt were originally scheduled to have an onstage discussion at the event, but it was canceled at the last minute for reasons Mouline said he did not know. Instead, he said, the two shared breakfast in Marrakesh just before Pruitt headed back to Washington on Dec. 13.

Pruitt and several aides listened quietly as he explained his agency’s work in promoting renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, Mouline recalled. He said he also spoke about climate change

and how Africa is not a major producer of greenhouse gases but “is a continent that suffers a lot” from the warming of the planet.

On their way from Rabat to Marrakesh the previous day — a several-hour trip by van — Pruitt and his group had stopped in the town of Ben Guerir to visit the Green Energy Park. The space is an incubator for solar power and other renewable energy technologies founded by IRESEN, a Moroccan public research center, the energy ministry and OCP, the industrial giant that mines, refines and exports phosphates used in fertilizers all over the world.

Badr Ikken, who runs the park and led Pruitt’s tour, said it lasted a little more than an hour and that Pruitt seemed fully engaged in issues from electric cars to new energy-storage technologies. Ikken said that he discussed Morocco’s efforts to improve natural gas production as part of his presentation but that Pruitt didn’t raise the U.S. gas industry.

“I had a real positive feeling about him,” Ikken said. “Maybe he was impressed by what we are doing.”

Pruitt and his aides also visited the adjacent Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, a research institution that was opened by King Mohammed VI last year and is largely supported by OCP and, like the Green Energy Park, built on land owned by the company. There, Pruitt met with chief executive Mostafa Terrab. Again, Smotkin was there, according to two people familiar with the meeting.

“OCP is often invited to be present

during major events or visits of important dignitaries to the University and Green Energy Park, and it is in this context that Mr. Terrab greeted Administrator Pruitt,” a company statement said.

According to an OCP official, Pruitt heard a presentation about the university’s role in creating sustainable energy and development for Morocco and the rest of Africa. This official said the company’s commercial interests were not part of the presentation, though one individual familiar with the session said OCP officials spoke extensively about its role as a phosphate producer and exporter.

Pruitt’s trip barely registered in the local media in Morocco and went virtually unmentioned by the state-run media agency, perhaps because the EPA gave no notice he was coming — a typical practice since he took office.

By midmorning on Dec. 13, Pruitt and his entourage boarded a plane in Marrakesh for the flight home, connecting in Amsterdam and New York, according to his public schedule.

It was after 10:30 p.m. when Pruitt finally arrived back in Washington. Twelve hours later, he was due at the White House to participate in a press roundtable touting President Trump’s accomplishments for the year.

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Alice Crites contributed to this report. Eilperin and Dennis reported from Washington.

Police allowed to fire at vehicles

Rules loosened in D.C., elsewhere in response to ramming attacks

BY PETER HERMANS

Two decades ago, amid a growing controversy over police chases in the nation's capital, officers in the District were largely barred from firing at moving cars.

The rules didn't apply if someone was in the car, but police officials concluded that in most cases the specific nature of the threat, the vehicle's location, and the officer's ability to safely dismount or stop it anyway, other departments had adopted similar policies.

Now, however, several agencies are loosening those rules to deal with a new threat: terrorists in trucks ramming down and killing pedestrians. Police in Washington, New York City, Chicago and Las Vegas have been allowing officers to fire at moving vehicles to stop such ramming attacks. While officers about the tactic remain, authorities say that, to extreme violence, trying to shoot the driver might be the only way to save lives.

"We have to balance the threat to the community with the idea of not using force unless absolutely necessary," said D.C. Police Chief Peter Newell. "It's not our intent to make sure officers completely understand this is a special situation, a last resort, but one that may be necessary to save lives."

The move to loosen the restrictions under which officers are authorized to use deadly force



A symbolic battle at the border

Despite Trump caravan threats, U.S. has little choice but to let in migrants seeking asylum

BY KEVIN BEATY AND SETH MORN

ELIZABETH ZILBA GOSWAMI AND ENZO VEGA, FROM TOP LEFT, IN QUINCY, ILLINOIS, WITH THEIR DAUGHTER NINA, 12, IN QUINCY, ILLINOIS.

Quincy, Ill., is a small town of about 10,000 people, mostly young women and children, who have been seeking asylum in the United States. The town is the only one in the country that has been designated as a "sanctuary" for migrants. The town's mayor, Elizabeth Zilba Goswami, has been a vocal supporter of the migrants. She has helped them find housing and jobs. She has also helped them with their legal cases. She has even helped them with their children's education.

The president has used the

Mueller warned of order to testify

TRUMP TEAM ASSAILS IDEA OF SUBPOENA

Spurring over interview list of questions

BY CAROL D. LEVING AND ROBERT COVATTA

In a tense scenario in early March, with special counsel Robert Mueller's subpoena for the president's attorney, Trump lawyers insisted he had no obligation to appear in person. They argued that the president's attorney should be the one to testify.

Mueller's warning — the first time he is known to have mentioned a possible subpoena to Trump's legal team — spurred a sharp retreat from John Dowd, the president's lawyer. Dowd said, according to two people with knowledge of the situation, "This was not a warning. This was a demand."

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LOVE AMID THE REVOLT

The light for freedom took him from her. Would she ever see his again?

BY LORNA LOVELACE AND SUZAN HADAMOUS

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BY KEVIN SULLIVAN, JULIE ELLIOTT AND BRADY DENNIS

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Amd mounting scrutiny, two officials close to EPA administrator resign

By JULIE ELLIOTT AND KEVIN SULLIVAN

Two EPA officials are expected to resign in the coming weeks, one of them likely within the next few days, according to sources familiar with the agency's internal affairs. The officials are Scott Pruitt's deputy assistant administrator, Robert Anderson, and the director of the agency's Office of Policy, Planning and Administration, Robert Anderson. Both officials have been under scrutiny in recent months due to their involvement in the agency's response to the Dakota Access pipeline protests.

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2018

Influential outsiders played a key role in Pruitt's travel

**BY JULIET EILPERIN
AND BRADY DENNIS**

Scott Pruitt's itinerary for a February trip to Israel was remarkable by any standard for an Environmental Protection Agency administrator: A stop at a controversial Jewish settlement in the West Bank. An appearance at Tel Aviv University. A hard-to-get audience with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

One force behind Pruitt's eclectic agenda: casino magnate and Republican megadonor Sheldon Adelson, a major supporter of Israel who arranged parts of Pruitt's visit.

The Israel trip was canceled days before Pruitt's planned departure, after The Washington Post revealed his penchant for first-class travel on the taxpayers' dime. But federal documents obtained by The Post and interviews with individuals familiar with the trip reveal that it fit a pattern by Pruitt of planning foreign travel with significant help from outside interests, including lobbyists, Republican donors and conservative activists.

After taking office last year, Pruitt drew up a list of at least a dozen countries

he hoped to visit and urged aides to help him find official reasons to travel, according to four people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal agency deliberations. Pruitt then enlisted well-connected friends and political allies to help make the trips happen.

Longtime Pruitt friend Richard Smotkin, for example, helped arrange Pruitt's four-day visit to Morocco in December. Smotkin, who has not returned calls seeking comment, later signed a \$40,000-a-month lobbying contract with the Moroccan government.

American Australian Council treasurer Matthew Freedman, whose group's members include ConocoPhillips, helped line up a September trip to Australia, where Pruitt was scheduled to promote liquefied natural gas exports during a tour of the company's natural gas facility. That trip also was canceled. Freedman did not respond to calls seeking comment; the council said it "authorized" Freedman to "have discussions" with the EPA about the trip.

And in Israel, Pruitt was scheduled to unveil an agreement with Water-Gen, an

Influential outsiders have played key role in EPA administrator's foreign travel



RICKY CARIOTI/THE WASHINGTON POST

Scott Pruitt, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, testifies last month before a House Appropriations subcommittee on the interior, environment and related agencies. Pruitt's travel program has come under scrutiny, with questions raised about the involvement of his associates in planning his travel and the relevance of some of the stops to his agency's core mission

Israeli water purification company championed by Adelson. Adelson does not have a financial stake in Water-Gen, according to his aides and the company, but was impressed by its technology and had urged Pruitt to meet with Water-Gen executives soon after he took office. That meeting took place on March 29, 2017.

Within weeks, Pruitt instructed his aides to find a way to procure Water-Gen's technology, according to two administration officials who spoke on the condition of

anonymity for fear of retaliation. The EPA signed an agreement with the company in January; Pruitt had hoped to announce it while he was in Israel. Water-Gen is now working with EPA technical staff in Cincinnati to test its technology in hopes of obtaining a federal contract to provide drinking water in places where the water supply has been contaminated.

On Thursday, Adelson's top political adviser, Andy Abboud, confirmed his involvement in planning Pruitt's Israel

agenda, but played down its significance, saying, “Many people consult” Adelson before making the journey.

“In some cases, we will make an introduction to various officials traveling to Israel and Israeli staff officials,” Abboud said. Of the planned Pruitt trip, he said: “It was very perfunctory, and I would describe them as simple introductions.”

In an email, EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox said agency officials in the Office of International and Tribal Affairs “organized and led the effort around Administrator Pruitt’s” trip to Israel, as well as planned journeys to Italy, Morocco, Mexico and Australia. Wilcox declined to answer questions about Adelson’s role, Water-Gen or other travel-related matters.

Pruitt’s practice of involving outsiders in his travels raises serious ethical concerns, legal experts said; federal law prohibits public officials from using their office to enrich themselves or any private individual, or to offer endorsements.

Late Thursday, Democratic Sens. Thomas R. Carper (Del.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.) wrote to Pruitt seeking more information about the Israel trip, the agency’s agreement with Water-Gen and “the role Mr. Adelson or other non-governmental officials played.”

Along with Israel and Australia, Pruitt’s wish list for global travel included Saudi Arabia, Colombia, Panama, Poland, Japan, India and Canada, former staff members said, adding that Pruitt asked staffers to schedule the trips at a pace of roughly one

per month. Political and career officials at the EPA suggested a handful of other destinations, these people said, including China and Germany.

So far, Pruitt has traveled only to Italy and Morocco. He has canceled trips to Australia, Japan and Israel after extensive advance work by EPA officials.

In Italy and Morocco, Pruitt granted his friends unusual access to official events. In Italy, for example, Pruitt met up in Rome with Leonard Leo, executive vice president of the conservative Federalist Society.

Leo, who is Catholic, personally arranged private events for Pruitt and his aides, including a private tour of the Vatican Library and the Apostolic Palace, according to a participant in the trip. When Pruitt left a private Vatican Mass for a discussion of environmental policy with Archbishop Paul Gallagher, he invited Leo to join the meeting, according to two participants on the Italy trip.

Leo declined Thursday to comment.

In Morocco, Smotkin joined Pruitt’s entourage on multiple stops, including a meeting with one of the kingdom’s most prominent business leaders, according to three individuals familiar with the trip.

Legal experts said that it is highly unusual for private citizens to participate in official meetings when Cabinet members travel overseas, and that such invitations could be construed as tacit endorsements of a group’s agenda. Federal ethics rules prohibit public officials from endorsing “any product, service or enterprise,”

said Don Fox, a former acting director of the Office of Government Ethics.

“This is the problem with Pruitt,” said Virginia Canter, executive branch ethics counsel for the nonprofit Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. “He’s basically acting as a lobbyist for all of his friends.”

From his first days at the EPA, Pruitt made clear to top aides that Israel was high on his agenda. Pruitt had met Adelson while serving as Oklahoma attorney general, and he agreed when Adelson suggested he meet with executives from Water-Gen.

Yehuda Kaploun, president of Water-Gen USA, said Thursday that Adelson became an enthusiastic backer after learning about the company’s innovative method of drawing potable water from moisture in the air.

While Adelson had no investments or other financial involvement in the company, Kaploun said, he asked executives “whether we’d be prepared to meet with EPA.”

On March 29, 2017, Kaploun and the parent company’s executive chairman, Maxim Pasik, met with Pruitt in his office in Washington. The entry in Pruitt’s official calendar, released under a public records request, includes a note that reads: “This came as a request of Sheldon Adelson.”

Water-Gen executives brought along one of the company’s “home and office” units, which can produce three to five gallons of water a day, and removed it from

Pruitt’s office about a week later. During the meeting, Kaploun said, Pruitt asked company executives to meet with EPA water experts, inquired how quickly they could scale up and wanted to know whether they intended to manufacture in the United States.

“The administrator’s goal, which he stated at the meeting, is that this can help people. It can give people clean air and water,” Kaploun said, adding that Pruitt mentioned the Flint, Mich., drinking-water crisis as one potential use.

Pasik had a follow-up meeting with Pruitt in May, according to Pruitt’s calendar, and a few months later, the EPA announced that it was seeking up to four private-sector partners “for a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement to investigate the potential use of atmospheric water generators.”

Such agreements often involve multiple firms. In this case, the EPA has so far cemented an agreement only with Water-Gen, in January. It was scheduled to be unveiled in February, during Pruitt’s trip to Israel.

Many of the planned stops on that trip were the sort any EPA administrator would undertake, according to Pruitt’s itinerary. For example, he was scheduled to meet with ministers of environmental protection and energy, visit a wastewater facility in Jerusalem and stop at one of the world’s largest desalination plants.

Other proposed stops were less clearly related to his mission, such as excursions

to the City of David and the Galilee region, where Jesus once preached. Just before Pruitt was scheduled to depart, an Adelson associate met Pruitt aides Millan Hupp and Sarah Greenwalt in Israel to hammer out details of some of those events, according to a person familiar with those meetings.

Although the trip was canceled, EPA testing of Water-Gen's technology continues. Federal officials said a second company, AquaSciences, could soon be added to the agreement.

Kaploun said that Water-Gen "followed total protocol" in seeking EPA approval and that as far as he knew, no other firms had initially applied.

"Our technology is so advanced that no one else is in the same realm," he said, adding that Water-Gen had shouldered the cost of delivering one of its units to the EPA lab.

Kaploun and Water-Gen's U.S. CEO, Edward Russo — a former environmental consultant to Donald Trump who authored a book titled "Donald J. Trump: An Environmental Hero" — visited the president's Mar-a-Lago estate in March. They briefed Trump about the technology, and the president invited them to the Oval Office for a demonstration, Kaploun said.

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Josh Dawsey contributed to this report

The Washington Post

Partly sunny 90-64 • Tomorrow: Showers 72-50 • 2018 • DEMOCRACY DIES IN DARKNESS • FRIDAY, MAY 4, 2018 • B2



Sophie Gaylor, left, and Charlie Rose posed for a photo in 2013 when he was a '60 Minutes' staffer. Both Rose and Rose, center, and Brooks Harris work for programs that Rose worked on in the 1980s and 2017, respectively, and said the newsmen made sexual comments.

CBS managers were told about Rose

27 additional women, 14 of them at the network, say the veteran newsmen sexually harassed them. The Post investigation is based on interviews over a five-month period with 307 women and former CBS news anchors as well as two dozen others who worked with Rose at other television stations.

Giuliani story of payoff may fuel prosecutors' case

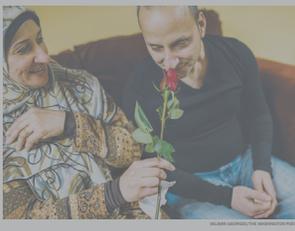
ACCOUNT CLASHED WITH PRESIDENT'S Surprise legal strategy stuns White House officials

BY MATT ZAPROWITZ, DEVIN BARRETT, CAROL H. LEVINE AND MICHELLE Y. HUI LEE

Rudolph W. Giuliani's media blitz to convince the public that neither Donald Trump nor his lawyer had violated the law by paying a sum to keep quiet about an alleged affair with a former White House press secretary, now the new White House lawyer, has backfired, giving investigators new leads to chase and new evidence of potential crimes, legal officials say.

Across U.S., Republicans' efforts to arm teachers stall

In the two months after the deadly shooting that left 17 dead, Republican legislators across the country introduced 10 measures to arm teachers and staff members in schools.



A portrait of their lives: All Aisha Adams recalls the one he gave his wife, Arwan Chaudhry, during their wedding anniversary dinner in February 2017. The couple, Iraq immigrants, and their three sons shared their daily lives in Michigan with the Washington Post photographer for a year. A19

Again, Trump is caught in a lie. Will it change anything?

THE TAKE The questions won't go away. They're part of the fabric of this presidency.

Does it bother anyone that President Trump has been caught lying? Then it bothers anyone that this isn't new. Does it bother anyone that the president has been exposed time and time again? These questions are on everyone's mind.

Influential outsiders played a key role in Pruitt's travel

Thousands of Montgomery County residents were told in a letter that they should prepare for a possible power outage during the trip.

Environmental Protection Agency or other regulator. A trip to a first-class travel on the taxpayers' dime. But federal documents obtained by the Post and investigated by VA tourism: Staff notes highlights tourism over proposed changes. A2

IN THE NEWS

- THE NATION Missouri legislators will hold a special session to consider amending the state constitution to allow the state to issue bonds to pay for the state's debt. A1
- A New York judge ruled that the state's ban on gay, lesbian, and transgender people in the military is unconstitutional. A1
- THE REGION A holder left alone for hours in a vehicle in Southern, Md., was a hot dog. The father was charged. B1
- THE ECONOMY Private watchdogs say Facebook's dating service could expose users to sexual predators and other problems. A12

INSIDE

- WEEKEND The burger court at the new \$200 Diner in Washington, D.C., is a hit. B1
- ENDING GRACE The new \$200 Diner in Washington, D.C., is a hit. B1
- STALE The new \$200 Diner in Washington, D.C., is a hit. B1

Ariz. teachers end walkout after getting promise of raises, increased funding

Legislators worked all night to pass a bill that would raise teacher pay and increase state funding for education. The walkout ended after the state agreed to a deal.

The state is giving teachers a 20 percent raise by 2020 and increasing an additional \$18 million to \$200 million for education. The deal also includes a 10 percent raise for teachers and a 5 percent raise for administrators.

Ryan lets House chaplain keep job after priest rescinds his resignation

Allegations that he had been outraged lawmakers. Ryan let the chaplain keep his job after the priest rescinded his resignation.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan let the Rev. Thomas Shannon keep his job as the House chaplain after the priest rescinded his resignation. Ryan said he was disappointed by the priest's decision.

Influential outsiders have played key role in EPA administrator's foreign travel

With individuals familiar with the trip reveal that it is a pattern by Pruitt of planning foreign travel with significant help from outside advisers, including lobbyists, Republican donors and conservative think tanks.

After taking office last year, Pruitt drew up a list of at least a dozen countries he hoped to visit. Pruitt also hired a travel agent to help him find flight routes to travel around the world.

And in Israel, Pruitt was accompanied by a group of advisers, including lobbyists, Republican donors and conservative think tanks. Pruitt's trip to Israel was part of a larger effort to build relationships with foreign officials.

Lawrence Pruitt hired Richard B. Berman, a lobbyist, to help him plan a four-day trip to Mexico in December. Pruitt has not returned calls seeking comment from his agent's \$40,000-a-month lobbying contract with the Mexican government.

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Pruitt asked aide to help his wife open a Chick-fil-A

**BY JULIET EILPERIN,
BRADY DENNIS
AND JOSH DAWSEY**

Three months after Scott Pruitt was sworn in as head of the Environmental Protection Agency, his scheduler emailed Dan Cathy, chief executive of the fast-food company Chick-fil-A, with an unusual request: Would Cathy meet with Pruitt to discuss “a potential business opportunity”?

A call was arranged, then canceled, and Pruitt eventually spoke with someone from the company’s legal department. Only then did he reveal that the “opportunity” on his mind was a job for his wife, Marlyn.

“The subject of that phone call was an expression of interest in his wife becoming a Chick-fil-A franchisee,” company representative Carrie Kurlander told The Washington Post via email.

Marlyn Pruitt never opened a restaurant. “Administrator Pruitt’s wife started, but did not complete, the Chick-fil-A franchisee application,” Kurlander said. But the revelation that Pruitt used his official position and EPA staff to try to line up work for his wife appears to open a new

chapter in the ongoing saga of his questionable spending and management decisions, which so far have spawned a dozen federal probes.

Pruitt’s efforts on his wife’s behalf — revealed in emails recently released under a Freedom of Information Act request from the Sierra Club — did not end with Chick-fil-A. He also approached the chief executive of Concordia, a New York nonprofit. The executive, Matthew A. Swift, said he ultimately paid Marlyn Pruitt \$2,000, plus travel expenses, to help with logistics for the group’s annual conference in September.

Current and former EPA aides, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe private conversations, said Scott Pruitt told them he was eager for his wife to start receiving a salary. Two said the administrator was frustrated in part by the high cost of maintaining homes in both Washington and Oklahoma.

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox declined to comment on Pruitt’s overtures to Concordia and Chick-fil-A on his wife’s behalf.

Federal ethics laws bar public officials from using their position or staff for pri-

vate gain. A Cabinet-level official using his perch to contact a company CEO about a job for his wife “raises the specter of misuse of public office,” said Don Fox, who was head of the federal Office of Government Ethics during the Obama administration. “It’s not much different [from] if he [had] asked the aide to facilitate getting a franchise for himself.”

Asking a government scheduler, Sydney Hupp, to plan the meeting also marks a violation of federal rules barring officials from asking subordinates to perform personal tasks, Fox said. “It is a misuse of the aide’s time to ask the aide to do something like this that is really for personal financial benefit.”

Hupp left the EPA last year; she did not respond to a request for comment.

Hupp was not the only EPA employee enlisted to perform nonofficial tasks. Last month, Pruitt acknowledged that Hupp’s sister, Millan, helped him search for housing in the District. She later told congressional staffers that she made inquiries at the Trump International Hotel about buying him a used mattress while she was on the EPA payroll.

Georgia-based Chick-fil-A receives about 40,000 “expressions of interest” each year from people hoping to operate one of its restaurants, Kurlander said.

“The process of becoming a franchisee is very thorough and results in approximately 100 people being selected each year,” she wrote. “We are very proud of the fact that those who are selected demonstrate the leadership ability and business

“It’s not much different if he [had] asked the aide to facilitate getting a franchise for himself.”

Don Fox, head of the federal Office of Government Ethics during the Obama administration

acumen needed to own and operate Chick-fil-A restaurants.”

Pruitt’s expression of interest began May 16, 2017, according to the released emails, when Sydney Hupp emailed Cathy that her boss “asked me to reach out to you and see if you might be willing to get a time set up for the two of you to have a meeting.”

Cathy, who has championed socially conservative causes and had met Pruitt during his tenure as Oklahoma attorney general, replied within an hour, connecting Hupp with one of his own aides, Evan Karanovich.

Karanovich asked whether “an initial phone call would be sufficient” and inquired what the EPA chief wanted to talk about. “The Administrator did not mention a specific topic, but I will touch base with him to see if there is one,” Hupp replied.

The two sides arranged a conference call for June 23, with Cathy scheduled to be joined by a senior attorney in his legal department. That call did not happen, company officials said, adding that “a call took place later between Administrator Pruitt and a Chick-fil-A staff member.”

The effort ultimately did not lead to a franchise for Marlyn Pruitt. Kurlander noted that “Mrs. Pruitt is not and has never

been a Chick-fil-A franchisee.”

Around the same time, Scott Pruitt contacted Swift, CEO of Concordia, a non-profit that brings together leaders from the private and public sectors. Pruitt asked Swift to call Marlyn Pruitt, Swift said in an email, which he did.

“We discussed her interest in event planning for nonprofits and events that take place in Washington,” Swift said. “Mrs. Pruitt was interested in meeting people in the nonprofit sector, and I offered to introduce her to some of Concordia’s attendees based in Washington and for her to become involved with Concordia’s events.”

Swift’s group had invited Scott Pruitt to speak at its 2017 conference in Manhattan, the same event where Marlyn Pruitt was paid \$2,000 for three days’ work. At the event, Scott Pruitt was accompanied by at least three aides. EPA travel records show his first-class plane ticket cost \$1,201.80, and his overnight stay came to \$669.

“Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Pruitt ever solicited a position for Mrs. Pruitt at Concordia, nor was it a condition of the agreement for the administrator to speak,” Swift said.

The Pruitts’ focus on augmenting their household income appears to have come after the administrator moved to Washington and began paying for two full-time residences. The EPA chief attracted widespread criticism for renting a \$50-a-night condo from a Washington lobbyist in the

early months of his tenure. Since then, his housing costs appear to have increased substantially.

According to public records, Pruitt and his wife hold an \$850,000 mortgage on their home in an upscale Tulsa neighborhood, requiring monthly payments of approximately \$5,500 — including \$17,793 in property taxes the couple paid last year. The mortgage has an adjustable rate, records show, so those payments eventually could rise.

In addition, the Pruitts lease an apartment in a modern development on Capitol Hill where one-bedroom units start at around \$3,000 per month.

As EPA head, Pruitt makes \$189,600 a year, according to federal records. In a federal financial form filed after he was nominated to lead the agency, Pruitt listed his only income as his attorney general’s salary, about \$133,000 per year.

Under the entry for spouse’s income and retirement accounts, he wrote, “None.”

Pruitt’s most recent financial disclosure was due in May, but like many Trump administration officials, he has requested a filing extension.

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Alice Crites and Andrew Ba Tran contributed to this report.

POWERPOST

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The Poor People's Campaign called for an immediate expansion of Medicaid during a protest Monday in the South Carolina statehouse.

States may expand Medicaid via ballot initiative

When the Trump administration started this year allowing states to require work or volunteering by their Medicaid recipients, there was a lot of speculation that more GOP-led state legislatures would finally adopt ObamaCare's Medicaid expansion.

But with the exception of Virginia, that mostly hasn't happened. The next states to expand Medicaid probably will do so in November. Last week, Utah's lieutenant governor announced there are a sufficient number of signatures for a ballot initiative to expand Medicaid, and activists in Idaho have said they've collected enough signatures for a ballot initiative.

When states start their legislative sessions this past spring, they will likely have more strings to the federal program than they typically have. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved work requirements for two states, and several others are awaiting permission to impose such requirements.

That's why it's more likely that Utah will expand Medicaid via the separate ballot initiative this fall. It votes on whether the state will expand its program to the ACA's 138 percent threshold, but the every other expansion state, that's the idea of each proposal and what the Trump administration will approve that effort anyway.

Pruitt asked aide to help his wife open a Chick-fil-A

By Juliet Eilperin, Brady Dennis, and Josh Dawsey

Three months after Scott Pruitt was sworn in as head of the Environmental Protection Agency, his scheduler emailed that Carly, chief executive of the fast-food company Chick-fil-A, with an unusual request: Would Carly meet with Pruitt to discuss a potential business opportunity?

A call was arranged, then canceled, and Pruitt eventually spoke with someone from the company's legal department. Only then did he tell Pruitt that the "opportunity" on his mind was a job for his wife, Marly.

The subject of that phone call was an expression of interest in his wife becoming a Chick-fil-A franchisee, "company representative" Carly Kurlander told The Washington Post via email.

Marly Pruitt never opened a restaurant. Administrator Pruitt's wife started but did not complete the Chick-fil-A franchise application, Kurlander said. But the revelation that Pruitt used his official position to get EPA staff to try to line up work for his wife appears to open a new chapter in the ongoing saga of his questionable operating and management decisions, which so far have opened a door to federal probes.

Pruitt's efforts on his wife's behalf were first reported in a release under a Freedom of Information Act request from Sierra Club. It did not end with Chick-fil-A. He also approached the chief executive of Concordia, a Utah nonprofit. The executive, Matthew A. Swift, said he ultimately passed Marly Pruitt \$2,000, plus travel expenses, to help with logistics for the group's annual conference in September.

Concordia, a Maine-based nonprofit, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe the program, said that Pruitt had been recruited to be the executive director of the group. Pruitt had been recruited for the job by the high-tech manufacturing firm in both Washington and Oklahoma.

Key Medicare fund to run out earlier than thought

The financial future of the part of Medicare that pays older Americans' hospital bills has deteriorated significantly, according to a new report from the Congressional Budget Office that projected a year ago.

The report, issued Monday by the House and Senate, says that the program's trust funds will run out by 2034, a year earlier than previously estimated.

Both programs have long been under political pressure to be reformed. The aging of the large baby-boom generation is making up an increasing share of the nation's population, with the nation's fastest-growing age group being those aged 65 and older.

From administration to administration, the trust funds report has for many years been a cautionary note about the financial fragility of the two main programs devoted to helping Americans in their older years.

Key Medicare fund to run out earlier than thought

side experts will power to slow Medicare spending if it reached certain thresholds.

Republican critics erroneously argued that the program should be expanded, but also whether there should be a new sales tax on nondurable items to pay for the extra portion of it.

ObamaCare trustee reports that the program has long been under political pressure to be reformed. The aging of the large baby-boom generation is making up an increasing share of the nation's population, with the nation's fastest-growing age group being those aged 65 and older.

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From administration to administration, the trust funds report has for many years been a cautionary note about the financial fragility of the two main programs devoted to helping Americans in their older years.

As revenue slips, hospital expenses will increase, the report says. A senior government official who briefed reporters on the audit said that part of that increase is because the law will start next year's end-of-year-of-the-actable Care Act requirements.

That's why it's more likely that Utah will expand Medicaid via the separate ballot initiative this fall. It votes on whether the state will expand its program to the ACA's 138 percent threshold, but the every other expansion state, that's the idea of each proposal and what the Trump administration will approve that effort anyway.

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Juliet Eilperin is a Washington Post reporter covering the EPA. Brady Dennis is a Washington Post reporter covering the EPA. Josh Dawsey is a Washington Post reporter covering the EPA.

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2018

Exodus hits EPA in era of Trump

WORKFORCE DROPS
BY 8 PERCENT

Big policy shifts hasten
departures, staffers say

**BY BRADY DENNIS,
JULIET EILPERIN
AND ANDREW BA TRAN**

On the campaign trail, Donald Trump vowed to dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency “in almost every form. We’re going to have little tidbits left, but we’re going to take a tremendous amount out.”

As president, he is making headway on that promise.

During the first 18 months of the Trump administration, records show, nearly 1,600 workers left the EPA, while fewer than 400 were hired. The exodus has shrunk the agency’s workforce by 8 percent, to levels not seen since the Reagan administration. The trend has continued even after a major round of buyouts last year and despite the fact that the EPA’s budget has remained stable.

Those who have resigned or retired include some of the agency’s most experi-

enced veterans, as well as young environmental experts who traditionally would have replaced them — stirring fears about brain drain at the EPA. The sheer number of departures also has prompted concerns over what sort of work is falling by the wayside, from enforcement investigations to environmental research.

According to data released under the Freedom of Information Act and analyzed by The Washington Post, at least 260 scientists, 185 “environmental protection specialists” and 106 engineers are gone.

Several veteran EPA employees, who have worked for both Republican and Democratic administrations, said the agency’s profound policy shifts under Trump hastened their departure.

“I felt it was time to leave given the irresponsible, ongoing diminishment of agency resources, which has recklessly endangered our ability to execute our responsibilities as public servants,” said Ann Williamson, a scientist and longtime supervisor in the EPA’s Region 10 Seattle office.

She left in March after 33 years at the agency, exasperated by having to plan how her office would implement President Trump’s proposed cuts and weary of



DOUG KAPUSTIN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Christopher Zarba retired in February after serving on the EPA's Scientific Advisory Board. He disagreed with plans to overhaul the board's membership.

For some EPA staff, 'it was time to leave'

what she viewed as the administration's refusal to make policy decisions based on evidence. "I did not want to any longer be any part of this administration's nonsense," she said.

In a statement Friday, Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler said he was focused on right-sizing the EPA, which Republicans have argued overreached under President Barack Obama, burdening industry with regulations such as those focused on climate change.

"With nearly half of our employees eligible to retire in the next five years, my

priority is recruiting and maintaining the right staff, the right people for our mission, rather than total full-time employees," he said.

Congress has so far maintained the EPA's budget at just more than \$8 billion, and while current proposals could shrink that amount, any cuts are likely to be modest.

"The Trump administration comes in and goes way, way beyond what the budget requires," said Rep. David E. Price (D-N.C.), a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee and whose district is home to a major EPA research center. Price said multiple constituents have told him that working at the EPA has

become “intolerable” after seeing their findings sidelined.

“It is profoundly demoralizing, and I think, profoundly damaging in terms of the agency’s mission,” he said.

The EPA is not alone in shedding personnel under Trump, despite the fact that Congress passed a \$1.3 trillion budget bill in March that boosted both military and domestic spending.

The State Department’s total number of permanent employees, for instance, fell 6.4 percent between Trump’s inauguration and March 2018, according to federal records, while the Education Department declined 9.4 percent during that time.

Part of the drop stems from a government-wide hiring freeze Trump imposed after his inauguration, which lasted nearly three months. The president has continued to press for a leaner federal payroll, asking Congress recently to withhold pay raises for federal workers in 2019.

In a few instances, Trump’s deputies are trying to fill the widespread vacancies in their department’s ranks. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo recently began trying to staff the many senior positions that remained empty under his predecessor, Rex Tillerson. Meanwhile, Veterans Affairs is eager to hire doctors, nurses and other medical professionals to fill thousands of vacancies.

But at the EPA, it is largely a case of



Ann Williamson left in March, exasperated by having to plan how her office would implement President Trump’s proposed cuts.

career staff members headed for the exits. Hundreds of employees accepted buyouts last summer, and records show that nearly a quarter of the agency’s remaining 13,758 employees are now eligible to retire. At its peak in the late 1990s, the EPA employed more than 18,000 people.

Christopher Zarba, who retired in February after serving as director of the EPA’s Scientific Advisory Board, disagreed with former administrator Scott Pruitt’s decision last year to overhaul the board’s membership. Zarba, a 38-year EPA veteran, said that for many staff members, a belief in the agency’s mission had compensated for less-than-ideal working conditions.

“That is the crazy glue that holds the place together, the idea, “This is important. We’re making a difference,” he said. “And when that crazy glue begins to fall apart, things change.”

That sentiment played a role in Betsy Smith’s decision to retire in June after

20 years with the EPA's Office of Research and Development — a department singled out for massive cuts in Trump's first budget proposal. She said officials largely shelved a project she was leading that aimed to help port communities deal with climate change and other environmental challenges.

"It's really awful to feel like you don't have any role to play, that there's not any interest in the work you're doing," said Smith, 62. "My feeling was I could do better work to protect the environment outside the EPA."

Troy Hottle, 32, arrived at the EPA in early 2016 as a research fellow after getting his doctorate in sustainable engineering at Arizona State University. He expected to forge a career there, as others like him had historically done.

"I really felt good about what I was doing and who I was working with," Hottle said.

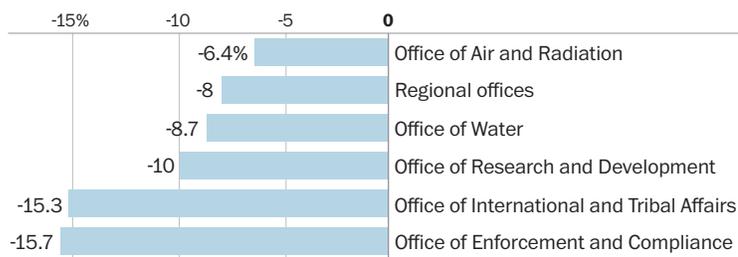
But a year and a half into his time at the EPA, the future hiring prospects within the Office of Research and Development seemed uncertain at best. The career path he had "spent half a lifetime" pursuing, he said, no longer looked so appealing.

Last September, when he got a job offer from a national environmental consulting firm, he decided to make the leap.

After his arrival, Pruitt quickly gained a reputation for excluding career officials from key decisions and showing little

Under Trump, many EPA offices have seen staffs dwindle

The EPA has lost 8 percent of its workforce during the first 18 months of the administration, shrinking the agency to a size not seen since the Reagan era. Here are some of the offices most affected.



Source: EPA

THE WASHINGTON POST

regard for the agency's own research. He also took the president's desire to scale back the EPA to heart, repeatedly boasting about how a buyout and early retirement push last year reduced the agency workforce.

Other conservatives also have cheered the whittling down of EPA's size and reach as appropriate and overdue.

"It doesn't take a bigger bureaucracy to clean our environment," Rep. Ken Calvert (R-Calif.), who chairs the House subcommittee overseeing the EPA's budget, said in a statement. "A lean and efficient workforce at the EPA is a win for taxpayers and the environment by allowing more funding to go towards efforts to clean our water and air." The agency also underwent buyouts during the Obama administration, but EPA still had about 15,000 employees when he left office.

EPA officials last year launched a reorganization aimed at streamlining the agency, and Wheeler has struck a more measured tone as he has pursued it. A former EPA staff member himself, he praised

career employees in a speech after his appointment, saying his “instincts” would be to defend their work and sympathizing about the stress that comes with the changes the agency is undergoing.

On Thursday, he sent an agencywide email announcing that regional offices would be redesigned to mirror the structure at headquarters.

As the departures continue, some EPA workers have voiced worries that the administration’s refusal to fill vacancies with younger employees has effectively blocked the pipeline of new talent.

Dan Costa, 70, joined the EPA 34 years ago as a staff scientist, rising through the ranks to direct its national air, climate and energy research program in 2011. He stepped down from that post in January, and he said he spent part of the last year counseling younger researchers who saw no possibility of replicating his career path.

“I had young people come into my office, close the door and say, ‘What should I do? Should I be looking for a job somewhere else?’” he said. He said he advised one young man to “test the waters” given the current regime. “These people are like termites, gnawing at the foundation.”

Multiple current and former employees also say that the exodus at the EPA has left important work falling through the cracks. In Chicago, for instance, a civil investigator responsible for probing who is

responsible for Superfund sites left earlier this year and has yet to be replaced, said Mike Mikulka, president of the local union that represents EPA employees.

“You can talk all you want, but your actions speak far louder,” he said, noting that Pruitt had held up Superfund as a top priority during his tenure. “What’s happening is that the lowest priority work just doesn’t get done. And some of that work is really critical.”

One of the EPA divisions hardest hit by staff cuts is the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, whose numbers dipped 15.7 percent between January 2017 and August 2018. Several experts said that any cuts to that division have a major impact because the vast majority of its budget comes from personnel costs rather than grants or other expenditures.

Granta Nakayama, who headed the office from 2005 to 2009, said that it couldn’t sustain that deep a staffing cut without curtailing some of its operations.

“If you don’t have people to enforce the regulations, you’re not going to get enforcement, and you’re not going to get compliance,” said Nakayama, now a partner at the law firm King & Spalding. “If you don’t have boots on the ground, it doesn’t happen.”

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The versatile Mr. Smith Redskins open season in Arizona, betting on their new quarterback sports



Ten years after America still recovering from effects of 2008's massive financial crisis BUSINESS



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Midterms becoming all about president

Trump's rash behavior, more than policies, taking center stage

BY ARLY PARKER AND PHILIP REEKER

The striking split-screen letter arrived in an envelope marked "Urgent: Action Required." On Fred Casanova's desk, the envelope and its contents were just as striking. They were just as striking as the 2008 Democratic wave, which a back-to-back Obama health-care law flung the 2010 Republican takeover. This year is shaping up differently. The No. 6 election that will determine control of Congress is likely to be the president — the man and his rash actions, more so than his policies — to a remarkable degree.



The border wall: Gravestone to a way of life? BY BRIAN DENNIS, PHILIP REEKER AND ANDREW B. TRAM

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A cold-cash prospect in less-icy Arctic

Ship packed with fish and geists tests route that could serve Moscow

BY WILLIAM BROTH AND AMIE FERRE-BOTMAN

LONDON — Under partly sunny skies and relatively balmy temperatures in the low 60s, the Venice March sailed through the Bering Strait this past week and steered hard to port, beginning a modern-day voyage of discovery that could herald a transformation in the global shipping and the Arctic.

Exodus hits EPA in era of Trump

Workforce drops 15 percent. Big policy shifts hasten departures, staffers say

BY BRIAN DENNIS, PHILIP REEKER AND ANDREW B. TRAM

The exodus was dramatic. Donald Trump vowed to dismantle the entire Environmental Protection Agency. "I'm almost over here. We're going to have little fights, but we're going to take a tremendous beating on that promise."

Central American conference scrapped

High-level conference intended to highlight U.S. security cooperation with Mexico and Central America was abruptly called off

BY NICK MORGAN AND JESSICA PARLOW

A high-level conference intended to highlight U.S. security cooperation with Mexico and Central America was abruptly called off Friday and facing diplomatic tensions with El Salvador and Guatemala, according to two Trump administration officials.

Sexist power play ruins powerful final

Chair umpire Carlos Ramos managed to rob not one but two players in the women's U.S. Open final

BY SALLY KATZMAN

Chair umpire Carlos Ramos managed to rob not one but two players in the women's U.S. Open final. Nobody has ever seen anything like this in any sport.

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Table with 4 columns: DEPARTMENTS, CHIEF, ASSISTANT CHIEF, and other roles.

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Interactive graphic

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SCOTT PRUITT: AFTER THE HIGH LIFE, A JOB HUNT

By Juliet Eilperin, Brady Dennis and Josh Dawsey

Graphics by Youjin Shin and Monica Ulmanu Dec. 28, 2018