



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAR 20 2008

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Union Colleagues:

Thank you for your letter outlining some of your experiences on the National Partnership Council (NPC). As you pointed out, the National Partnership Council was established almost ten years ago to provide a productive forum for EPA's management and labor unions to discuss and address a wide range of issues of interest to EPA's employees. During my 27 year tenure here at EPA as an employee, a manager, and now as the Administrator, I have always valued the perspectives of the unions and of all employees. I appreciate and respect your candor in offering your perspective on a number of issues and hope you can appreciate that I hold a different viewpoint.

Since becoming EPA's Administrator in 2005, I have been committed to ensuring that EPA uses the best available scientific information as the basis for decision making. While the issues that have come before me have often been complex, difficult and subject to various points of view, I am confident I have maintained this basic principle. We may disagree on the conclusions I have reached, but I assure you my decisions have been based on sound science and scientific integrity.

As a result, I believe EPA has compiled a significant record of environmental achievements and firsts during the past several years. Since 2001, the Bush Administration has invested over \$37 billion on climate change science, technology and tax incentive programs – more than any other country in the world. In 2006 alone, EPA's climate change efforts prevented an estimated 100 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, more than three times the emissions from all the cars in California. We have taken the steps necessary to clean up diesel engines that will, at long last, eliminate the black puff of diesel smoke that we often see coming from trucks or bus exhaust pipes. We developed rules to cut mercury emissions by 70 percent, the first time any Administration has proposed limits on atmospheric mercury. We are working with other countries on innovative solutions to global environmental challenges. A prime example is the work we are doing with 19 other nations to promote the recovery and use of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. We also have active working relationships with fast-growing countries such as China and India to encourage pollution prevention initiatives.

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You mentioned a number of issues that involve the relationship between me and our employees. Given my own experience in and affection for this Agency, I want to assure you that I take employees' concerns very seriously. That is why, when I announced my four priorities as Administrator, I selected what I term "A Stronger EPA" as one of them. For me, a key component of A Stronger EPA is to ensure that EPA's employees enjoy working at the Agency, value the work that they do, and feel they are making a contribution to our mission of protecting human health and the environment. By and large, I think our employees feel good about the Agency. An increasing number of them have decided to keep working here despite being eligible for retirement. And our employees continue to rank EPA as one of the top ten places to work in the federal government. Clearly, EPA is doing some things right.

That is not to say we should be satisfied with where we are, which is why the strengthening of EPA and its workforce is one of my priorities. To do this, I began a process that solicits and encourages input from the employees, including union members. This initiative is well under way, and union members have been participating in the effort to make EPA even better.

Over the past few years, there has been active and ongoing engagement with the unions, to a degree I believe has been unprecedented in the Agency's history. As you know, there are monthly conference calls between union leaders and EPA senior management, quarterly face-to-face meetings, and of course the annual National Partnership Council Meeting (with an agenda set with input from both management and union representatives). Union involvement has helped shape numerous Agency-wide initiatives including A Stronger EPA, the Performance Appraisal Recognition System (PARS) program enhancements, employee training, Leave Bank, the move to Human Resources Shared Service Centers, and the electronic Official Personnel Folders. Unions have yet another vehicle to help shape Agency policy through participation on our Human Resources Council.

Another indication of this commitment to our union partners is the fact that there is now a Master Collective Bargaining Agreement (MCBA) with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). The last time a Master agreement was reached with AFGE was in 1993. I am very pleased that we were able to reach this important agreement.

In sum, there are numerous examples of this Agency's continued interest in finding opportunities to discuss issues of mutual concern with our union colleagues and to reach mutually agreeable solutions. To the degree we can make our interaction with unions even better, I am committed to seeing that happen.

I trust your disagreement on policies where there are honest differences of opinion will not lead to you declining to offer your ideas and suggestions. The National Partnership

Council has been an important forum for you to raise issues and to learn about the Agency's direction. Your ideas are important to me, and I trust you will continue to be a strong advocate for EPA's employees.

Sincerely,



Stephen L. Johnson

To: William Evans, President, NTEU Chapter 280
Henry G. Burrell, President, AFGE Local 3428
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