



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

**MAY 28 2008**

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr. Charles Orzechoskie  
President, AFGE National Council of EPA Locals #238  
77 West Jackson Drive  
Chicago, Illinois 60604

Dear Mr. Orzechoskie:

I am writing to express my continuing concern over your withdrawal from the National Partnership Council and to extend an opportunity to find common ground and a constructive path forward. It has been my intent, since the beginning of my tenure as Administrator of EPA, to have a sound and collaborative relationship with our unions. As you know, I took the opportunity early on to meet with you and to lay the groundwork for a positive partnership. My sense from that time was that we were proceeding down the right path.

It is clear, however, that is not the case, and if we are to work collaboratively, we need to take steps now to get back on track. I do not believe that there has been an intentional effort to undermine a constructive working relationship. I do believe, however, that the efforts we have put forward to date do not appear to meet your expectations. It is critical that we come back together, clearly define mutual expectations, and then find the best means and mechanisms to address those expectations.

Building a stronger EPA is one of my four core priorities. A key to the success of that effort is assuring that the internal structure of the Agency is solid, and that means assuring that all EPA staff, including the unions, have a voice in what we do and how we do it. From the start, my Stronger EPA priority has invited staff input. Over 140 people across the Agency are directly involved in the effort, and every EPA employee has been invited to offer ideas and suggestions for the work of this group. Several of the ideas captured thus far in the Stronger EPA initiative came directly from unions, and unions have been involved in shaping the efforts of the work groups currently under way. I want to reiterate that there are numerous opportunities here to have you influence the future of the Agency, and I encourage you to continue your engagement. I am hopeful that with your involvement, implementation of the ideas now being discussed will benefit EPA employees for years to come and produce a better outcome for all.


I have asked three of EPA's most senior-level career employees to meet with you and hear first hand what suggestions you have to re-establish a strong and productive relationship

I have asked Lek Kadeli from the Office of Research and Development (who has extensive knowledge of science-related issues), Russ Wright from Region 4 (who is also co-chair of the Human Resources Council), and Susie Hazen from the Office of Administration and Resources Management (whose office also oversees Labor and Employee Relations) to contact you. I have asked them to get a sense of the issues most important to you, assess what is and what is not going well in our relationship, and determine what needs to be done to move forward. I will look to them for guidance on our next steps on how we can tangibly improve our relationship. It will help shape the agenda for future interaction between you and the Agency while I am here, as well as with the next administration.

I see this as a demonstration of good faith and a genuine search for opportunities to re-engage the unions in the work of the Agency. I hope you see it that way as well.

I have asked Lek, Russ, and Susie to contact you and begin discussions on next steps. I look forward to hearing the results of that conversation and determining what we can do together to make EPA the best it can be.

Sincerely,



Stephen L. Johnson