

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

January 11, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chair, Committee on Environment and Public Works
U.S. Senate
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Chairman Barrasso,

On January 9, 2018, on the eighteenth day of President Donald Trump's unnecessary and wasteful government shutdown, former coal industry lobbyist Andrew Wheeler was officially nominated to serve as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. On the same day, Senator John Barrasso, R-Wy., Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, announced to reporters that he would schedule Mr. Wheeler's confirmation hearing for next week.

We write to you to demand a postponement of Mr. Wheeler's confirmation hearing until the president's wasteful government shutdown, which has put more than 800,000 Americans out of work and millions more in financial jeopardy is ended, and the scientists, public health experts, law enforcement officers and career civil servants that serve at the Environmental Protection Agency can return to work.

It is profoundly unfair for Mr. Wheeler to audition for a promotion to lead an agency while the entire agency workforce is locked out and denied their paychecks, making it difficult to pay their bills and mortgages and provide for their families. The Senate has important business to address, including passing measures to fund the government and end this costly and wasteful shutdown, but ramming through controversial nominations to lead federal agencies that are shuttered is not among those priorities.

Andrew Wheeler, just before closing the EPA's doors to its workers, used the agency's last available resources to begin to undermine long-standing protections against mercury pollution, at the request of the coal industry at the expense of the American children and unborn babies. We deserve an EPA administrator who will prioritize the agency's mission of protecting public health and enforcing laws like the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act rather than rushing to a job interview so he can keep doing favors for the industry for which he served as a high-paid lobbyist.

The Senate should delay consideration of the Wheeler nomination while Americans go unpaid during the government shutdown.

Sincerely,



Gene Karpinski, President, League of Conservation Voters



Abigail Dillen, President, Earthjustice



Collin O'Mara, CEO, National Wildlife Federation




John Podesta, Founder and Director, Center for American Progress



Rhea Suh, President, Natural Resources Defense Council



Fred Krupp, President, Environmental Defense Fund



Ken Kimmel, President, Union of Concerned Scientists



Erich Pica, President, Friends of the Earth



Michael Brune, Executive Director, Sierra Club