**CAC Message Guidance: Wheeler Confirmation Vote**

Instead of outlining a plan to address climate change and accelerate the transition to clean energy, Mitch McConnell is instead pushing to install a polluter ally and climate action obstructionist to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The U.S. Senate is set to vote on the nomination of Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler, a former coal industry lobbyist who represented some of the largest polluters in the country, to confirm him as the permanent EPA Administrator.

Wheeler’s past as a top industry lobbyist calls into question his impartiality, and the actions he’s taken since becoming acting administrator only reinforce concerns that he’s a rubber stamp for the polluter industry’s rollback wish list. His rampant conflicts of interest should at least be under consideration, if not disqualifying, as Senators consider how they will cast their vote.

**Culture of Corruption at EPA and Interior**

* Andrew Wheeler was installed at the EPA after serving as deputy to Scott Pruitt, one of the most corrupt public officials in this Administration who resigned in disgrace last year.
* Wheeler has been joined at the EPA by Bill Wehrum, another industry insider with huge ethical conflicts who’s walked through the revolving door in order to influence public policy that benefits his former employers.
  + [Media reports](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/epa-regulator-skirts-the-line-between-former-clients-and-current-job/2019/02/24/b826b5fa-3767-11e9-a400-e481bf264fdc_story.html?utm_term=.745728e1082f) have uncovered some of the Pruitt-style corruption that’s become commonplace at Trump’s EPA. Wehrum has held meetings with his former employers and clients and worked to protect their interests at the EPA. I
* With Wheeler, Wehrum and other industry insiders at the EPA, it’s difficult to know where the lobbying firms end and the agency begins.
* Andrew Wheeler isn’t the only dirty deputy President Trump is trying to install in his cabinet.
* Trump has nominated notorious industry lobbyist David Bernhardt to lead the Department of Interior.
  + Bernhardt, much like Wheeler, spent decades working for and receiving compensation from industry polluters, including NRG Energy, Sempra Energy, and the Independent Petroleum Association of America.
  + Under Bernhardt’s watch during the government shutdown when national parks were shuttered, the Department of Interior made sure their bureaus were open for business to advance oil and gas drilling leases, wreaking havoc on America’s national parks, and causing damage for years to come.
* With Wheeler, Wehrum and Bernhardt, Trump isn’t “draining the swamp,” he’s pumping political and ethical sewage straight into the White House.
* What is clear is that Trump and Republicans in Congress have no intention of protecting Americans from pollution or climate change and instead are packing federal agencies with industry insiders who deny climate science and put polluters’ interests before public health.

**Wheeler Needs to Step Up On the Most Pressing Threats**

* As the Senate considers Wheeler’s nomination, senators should demand he take steps to protect our climate, our economy, our environment, our national security, and our health. Specifically, Wheeler should provide commitments that he will:
* Withdraw his anti-states’ rights proposal to limit state authority to set stronger clean car standards that reduce pollution and protect our health;
* Stop his attempt to undermine mercury pollution standards that reduce dangerous toxins from power plants, including mercury, arsenic, soot, and lead, which threaten children, pregnant women, and developing babies. Mercury is a potent neurotoxin that causes permanent damage to the brains of babies and unborn children, leading to developmental delays, learning disabilities, and birth defects.
* Drop his obstruction of the Kigali Agreement – an international agreement to address climate change by phasing down Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), the fastest growing and very dangerous climate pollutants used in refrigerants and aerosols – and allow the Senate to vote on ratification.
* Finalize the ban on deadly methylene chloride, a carcinogen in paint strippers that turns to carbon monoxide in the body and can threaten consumers with rapid asphyxiation and heart attacks.
* Commit to setting a drinking water standard for PFOA and PFOS within two years to protect Americans from the chemicals’ known dangerous health impacts, including cancer, thyroid disease, and impaired neurological development in children.
* Wheeler should not be allowed to lead the EPA without reversing course on his attempts to roll back or delay many of these important public health protections.
* The American people deserve a Cabinet that is committed to fulfilling the public protection missions of the agencies they lead. With Wheeler, Wehrum and Bernhardt, our country’s public health and public lands are being hijacked by the polluters who used to employ these nominees.

**Support for climate action is growing, across all age groups, all religions, and all political persuasions. The Trump administration’s anti-climate and anti-health policies are violently out of step with what the American people are demanding.**

* A [March poll](http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/politics-global-warming-march-2018/2/) from climate change researchers at Yale and George Mason Universities found 87 percent of Democrats and 56 percent of Republicans support bold climate action.
* [A November AP-University of Chicago poll](http://www.apnorc.org/projects/Documents/EPIC%20fact%20sheet_v4_DTP.pdf?wpisrc=nl_energy202&wpmm=1) found 86% of Democrats, 70% of independents and 52% of Republicans believe that climate change is happening now; and of those who believe climate change is happening *83 percent say the federal government should take steps to address climate change*.
* And 78 percent of Americans, including 64 percent of Republicans, believe extreme weather patterns and sea level rise are increasing as a result of climate change, according to [Monmouth University polling](https://www.monmouth.edu/polling-institute/reports/monmouthpoll_us_112918/).
* A [December 2018 Fox News Poll](https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fox-news-poll-president-trump-ends-year-two-with-46-percent-job-approval) found that 64% of voters are concerned about climate change – up 7 points from January 2018 - a boost mostly driven by a 13-point jump among Republicans.