**CAC TALKING POINTS: Pruitt Fails the White House Test**

* After dominating national news coverage for weeks with scandal after scandal, embattled EPA head Scott Pruitt failed to answer questions, take responsibility or demonstrate command of activity at his agency during testimony before either the House Energy and Commerce Committee or the House Appropriations Committee.
* Pruitt set up today’s hearings as a high-stakes showdown with Congress and even the White House acknowledged that Pruitt’s performance today would indicate how much longer he could count on their support. By all accounts, Pruitt failed miserably.
* Pruitt kicked off the proceedings proclaiming his commitment to transparency, then continued to deflect, distract, and deny accountability. His evasive responses only raised more questions about Pruitt’s serious ethics violations and his shifting attempts to keep the truth about his misconduct under wraps.
* Although many Republicans tried to sweep Pruitt’s unethical behavior under the rug, several others joined Democrats on the Committee to press Pruitt for answers on his abuse of taxpayer funds, corrupt dealings with industry lobbyists, retaliation against those within the agency who raised questions about his decisions, and his consistent rejection of sound science and public health protections.
* When questioned by Rep. Paul Tonko about excessive raises for political staff that went around White House policy, Pruitt contradicted his previous statements to Fox News about his role in authorizing pay raises.
  + Pruitt initially told Fox News' Ed Henry he not aware of lavish pay raises authorized for his political staff, blaming his staff for poor decision-making. But today, after several attempts to avoid answering the question, he admitted that he did indeed personally authorize the pay raises, proving Pruitt either lied to Congress or lied to Fox News.
* When questioned by Rep. Diana DeGette about his soundproof phone booth, Pruitt changed his story about the purpose of the phone booth and his role in it getting built. He initially claimed it was a secure phone booth or SCIF, but claimed today that it is actually not a SCIF and furthermore, he did not authorize its construction. The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) has deemed that Pruitt violated federal law by not notifying Congress before spending $43,000 in taxpayer funds on its construction.
* Pruitt’s story also shifted on his sweetheart deal for a condo connected to an energy industry lobbyist. He allowed Rep. Joe Barton to give the committee the impression that EPA ethics officials pre-approved his lease agreement. But under questioning later, Pruitt admitted the “approval” was secured well after the lease was signed.
* Throughout the hearing, Pruitt was unable to explain his new proposal to limit the science that EPA can consider when making federal rules.
* Pruitt couldn’t explain why he’s forced independent scientists to choose between EPA grants and service to the agency in their advisory capacity while industry-connected researchers are not forced to make that same choice. The real reason? Pruitt wants to censor peer-reviewed science and instead base his policies on industry-funded studies that downplay the serious health impacts of more pollution.
* When questioned by Rep. Chellie Pingree why he disagrees with the scientific consensus on climate change and why he doesn’t think a warming climate is necessarily a “bad thing,” Pruitt once again refused to back up his outrageous assertions, sticking to his polluter industry talking points.
* Time and again Pruitt refused to show any remorse for his abuse of taxpayer funds on lavish travel and other unnecessary expenses. Throughout the hearing he continued to throw staff under the bus, evaded questions about disturbing news reports, and claimed no knowledge of the inner workings of the agency he runs.
* The White House gave Pruitt one last chance to explain away his bad headlines and answer to the American public – as usual, Pruitt failed. Trump was the last person to have faith in Pruitt, and will be the next to lose it.