

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 17, 2019

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Mr. Charles J. Sheehan
Acting Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Acting Inspector General Sheehan:

We write to request that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) immediately initiate an independent investigation into a serious allegation of misconduct involving failure to protect public health. Senator Duckworth's staff recently received information alleging that EPA senior political appointees instructed career civil servants to avoid conducting inspections in Region 5 of facilities that emit Ethylene Oxide (EtO), a known carcinogen.

A review of public source reporting from EPA's official website appears to confirm EPA has failed to conduct inspections of EtO emitting facilities over the past six months across Region 5 and the Country, despite recent incidents involving dangerous exposure to this carcinogenic chemical. This fact pattern is concerning in and of itself. However, if the lax inspection and enforcement activity is a result of politically-motivated interference overriding recommendations of career staff, that would elevate our concerns from simple poor performance to potential outright misconduct by political appointees.

Accordingly, we urge the EPA OIG to swiftly begin a thorough independent investigation into allegations that senior EPA political appointees instructed or impeded investigations of facilities that emit EtO. Americans rely on EPA to protect them from public threats posed by contaminated air and water. The allegation that EPA may be preventing its personnel from carrying out this critical mission is disturbing and must be investigated to determine the truth, and if necessary, identify corrective actions.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on
Fisheries, Water and Wildlife



Tom Carper
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on
Environment and Public Works



Richard J. Durbin
Democratic Whip
United States Senate