

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

We write to urge you again to clarify that members of the EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) and the twenty other EPA science advisory committees have the right and are encouraged to speak to the public and the press about any scientific issues, including those before these committees, in a personal capacity without prior authorization from the agency.

We [wrote](#) in August expressing concern about a [memorandum](#) from EPA chief of staff Gwendolyn Keyes Fleming outlining a new policy requiring advisory committee members who receive requests from the public and the press “to refrain from responding in an individual capacity” regarding issues before the committee.

The policy requires all requests, both formal and informal, to be routed through EPA officials.

We are now aware of a [memo](#) dated November 2014 meant to clarify the April memo. The major purpose of the November memo apparently is to narrow the restrictions advisory committee members’ speech to the period when the committees are actively developing their advice for the agency.

However, that deliberative period is the most important time for any recommendation development. Under the policy, the public will be blocked from information, possibly for months, seriously constraining understanding about recommendations meant to impact health and the environment. It will also prevent important feedback from coming to the committee, even from some of the most prominent experts on the issues being considered.

There have always been many serious difficulties with free speech. But discussion that is continuously confined to a small number of people cannot inspire confidence.

We urge you again to ensure that EPA advisory committee members are encouraged share their expertise and opinions with those who would benefit from it.

Sincerely,

Society of Professional Journalists