

When there are hard decisions to make, who does EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt turn to? Not, as you might naively think, the experts on the staff of his own agency. Instead, he turns to industry lobbyists and lawyers, and to politicians like the Republican state attorneys general who used to be his colleagues. As the [NY Times](#) documented, Pruitt “has outsourced crucial work to a network of lawyers, lobbyists, and other allies, especially Republican state attorneys general.”

The people he *doesn't* turn to are the experts in his own agency. According to one recently retired senior staffer, whose experience goes back to the Reagan Administration, “I have been consistently informed by multiple career people at E.P.A. that Administrator Pruitt is not meeting with them ahead of making decisions like rolling back these major regulations.” This source is not alone: the agency's career scientists and legal experts say they have been largely cut out of the process,” and “senior staff members with decades of experience in environmental law and science said they had been consulted rarely on the agency's major decisions to undo environmental protections.” Pruitt is now attempting to do [buyouts](#) for about 8% of EPA's workforce, so there will be fewer staff members around anyway, and Trump's budget called for much big staff reductions.

Besides having industry replace staff advisors, Pruitt has been busy stocking the agencies' higher ranks with industry representatives. Here are some examples:

- Erik Baptist, Senior Deputy General Counsel, formerly a lawyer for the American Petroleum Institute.
- Nancy Beck, a policy director at the chemical industry's trade association, to oversee that industry.
- Liz Snyder Bowman, Acting Associate Administrator for Public Affairs, also a lobbyist for the chemical industry.
- Elizabeth “Tate” Bennett, deputy associate administrator of EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, formerly a lobbyist for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, whose members rely heavily on coal as a fuel.
- Troy Lyons, Associate Administrator for the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, formerly head of government affairs for an oil company.
- Christian Palich, a deputy associate administrator in the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, previously president of the Ohio Coal Association.

Pruitt's collusion with industry will also be aided by Trump's [plan](#) to nominate a coal lobbyist, Andrew Wheeler, for the #2 position at EPA.

Pruitt's intimate relationship with industry echoes his approach when he was Oklahoma AG.

When your power goes out in a storm, people might call the utility's repair service. Not Pruitt. He had his executive assistants at work call up a lobbyist and was rewarded by having a repair crew immediately sent to his house. Of course, this was only a small offshoot of a very cozy relationship. The energy industry also [contributed](#) over half of the donations to his campaign for state attorney general.

We know a lot more about industry influence on Pruitt in Oklahoma because in February, a local court forced the state government to turn over emails from his office, which painted a clear picture. As the [NY Times](#) reported, he "closely coordinated with major [oil](#) and gas producers, electric utilities and political groups with ties to the libertarian billionaire brothers Charles G. and David H. Koch to roll back environmental regulations." As in his current job, he depended heavily on industry for help, to the point of letting them draft official documents:

"The companies provided him with draft letters to send to federal regulators in an attempt to block regulations on greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas wells, ozone air pollution and chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, the technique of injecting chemicals underground to extract oil and gas, the emails show."

"Industry executives and Mr. Pruitt held secret meetings to discuss more comprehensive ways to combat the Obama administration's environmental agenda, and companies and the organizations they funded repeatedly praised Mr. Pruitt and his staff for the assistance in their campaign."

Pruitt's industry friends may benefit from his policies. But their effect on the public is another matter entirely.