

Statement of Lisa P. Jackson
Hearing on Nominations
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
January 14, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Please allow me to begin by first expressing my gratitude to Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe for holding this hearing; to Senators Lautenberg and Menendez for their kind introductions; to all the members of the Committee for their thoughtful statements; and to many of you for taking the time to meet with me over the past week.

If I may, Madam Chairman, I would like to introduce my husband, Kenny, whom I am delighted to have here with me. My sons, Marcus and Brian, wanted to be here today, but their demanding mother insisted they go to school instead. I'm also pleased to introduce friends from the Ramapough Mountain community in Upper Ringwood, New Jersey: Wayne Mann, Vivian Milligan, Jay Van Dunk and Veronica Van Dunk. They and too many other Ramapoughs have lived on top of a Superfund site for decades. They are vivid reminders to me of how EPA can be a force for good if it does its job well and what can go wrong if EPA falls short. When I was nominated by the President-elect to lead EPA, Vivian called me and cautioned me with one simple request. "Don't forget about us."

So I asked them here today, not to offer them empty promises, but as witnesses to what I hope will be the beginning of my journey as EPA Administrator.

I am deeply honored that President-elect Obama has nominated me to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. As one who has spent 21 years of my career in government service working to protect public health and the environment, I can think of no higher calling than to be asked to serve as EPA Administrator. It would be a particularly special privilege to head the agency where I worked as a career employee for 15 of those 21 years.

I joined EPA in 1987 as a staff engineer. Two years later, I moved to the agency's Region 2 office in New York, where I served as a project manager for hazardous waste sites. I worked my way up through the EPA ranks. In 2002, I moved to state government. On Mardi Gras Day in 2006, in honor of my beloved native New Orleans, Governor Jon Corzine swore me in as Commissioner of the New Jersey DEP, where I managed an agency of 3,400 dedicated public servants.

Madam Chairman, from a past of public service, I come to this moment, ready, able and eager to serve our country and the President-elect and mindful of the awesome responsibility of protecting public health and the environment.

President-elect Obama has affirmed two core values that he expects EPA to uphold during his Administration: scientific integrity and the rule of law. He has also made it clear

we will operate with unparalleled transparency and openness. I pledge to uphold those values.

Science must be the backbone of what EPA does. The environmental and public-health laws Congress has enacted direct the EPA administrator to base decisions on the best available science. EPA's addressing of scientific decisions should reflect the expert judgment of the Agency's career scientists and independent advisors.

If I am confirmed, I will administer with science as my guide. I understand that the laws leave room for policy-makers to make policy judgments. But if I am confirmed, political appointees will not compromise the integrity of EPA's technical experts to advance particular regulatory outcomes.

The President-elect's commitment to the rule of law is the hallmark of a principled regulatory agency. EPA needs to exercise its policy discretion in good faith and in keeping with Congressional and court directives. I respect this Committee for its diligent efforts to hold EPA to the rule of law in recent years, and I pledge to uphold this principle every day if I am confirmed.

The President-elect strongly believes responsible stewardship of our air and water can live side-by-side with robust economic growth. Done properly, these goals can and should reinforce each other.

The President-elect's environmental initiatives are highlighted by five key objectives: reducing greenhouse-gas emissions; reducing other air pollutants; addressing toxic chemicals; cleaning up hazardous-waste sites; and protecting water.

These five problems are tough, but so is our resolve to conquer them. Knowing the bright minds at EPA and the determination and spirit of Americans, we will.

I was raised in New Orleans. My mother, like so many others, lost all she had in Hurricane Katrina. Her home lay vulnerable because of its design, but also because of the failure of the government-built levees that were supposed to protect her. The natural defenses of the marshes and wetlands south of New Orleans have been destabilized by siltation and cut by oil and gas lines. The government agency that was supposed to respond to the disaster was inept and incapable. In the face of that tragedy, I almost left public service. But I stayed because I believe we can and must do better for my mother and for all Americans.

Like Vivian, Veronica, Wayne and Jay behind me here, my mother has suffered from environmental negligence. But none of them are victims. They are survivors. They are Americans. They are my conscience.

I pledge today to serve them and all Americans well. Thank you.