

# **FIRST LEGAL DEPOSITION SERVICES**

**Job #51475 - Fiscal Year 2021 EPA Budget  
Meeting**

[START RECORDING]

1 CONGRESSMAN KURT SCHRADER: Mr. Minster,  
2  
3 thanks again for being here and the work that  
4 your professional team does at the EPA, day in  
5 and day out. I know I've been frustrated in a  
6 district that is the size of mine, a lot of  
7 rural towns trying to comply with the  
8 regulations and it seems like they get slapped  
9 down pretty hard if they have, let's say, an  
10 accidental leak of -- I had a community years  
11 ago that, very small, I mean we're talking a few  
12 hundred people and they had a problem over a  
13 weekend and had a little sewage discharge. And  
14 the Department of Environmental Quality, the  
15 Oregon enforcer just hammered them. It was  
16 really frustrating to me then because meanwhile  
17 at that time Portland, the big city in Oregon  
18 was dumping raw sewage into the Willamette River  
19 at multiple locations whenever it rained hard.  
20 And they had some agreement to do that  
21 apparently. And so it really creates this  
22 frustration. Do you see that around the  
23 country? Talk to me about big urban cities.  
24 Are they cleaning up this problem? I mean

1 Washington D. C. used to discharge into the  
2 Potomac when it would rain here. Tell me what's  
3 going on in these big cities who are dumping  
4 sewage and other pollutants into bays and  
5 estuaries and rivers.  
6

7 MR. ANDREW WHEELER: We certainly do have a  
8 problem there and we're taking a harder look at  
9 that in communities around the country. In  
10 particular San Francisco has been putting 1.5  
11 billion gallons of raw sewage into the Pacific  
12 --

13 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] What?

14 MR. WHEELER: -- Ocean.

15 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: How much?

16 MR. WHEELER: 1.5 billion gallons.

17 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: A year?

18 MR. WHEELER: They've been, yes, they've  
19 been --

20 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] Raw  
21 sewage?

22 MR. WHEELER: Yes. They've been violating  
23 their permits and we're taking enforcement  
24 action there to try to --

25 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] How

1 long have they been doing that?

2  
3 MR. WHEELER: They've been in violation of  
4 their permits I believe since the 1970s. So we  
5 are taking action there. New York is, we're  
6 looking at that to see the --

7 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] New  
8 York City?

9 MR. WHEELER: Yes. We're early stages there  
10 but we're looking at the larger cities around  
11 the country to take a look at what their permits  
12 allow and whether or not they're violating their  
13 permits.

14 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: So my little towns  
15 get threatened with -- literally the mayor of  
16 this little town in Eastern Oregon told the  
17 Department of Environmental Quality: here, just  
18 take the keys. I mean based on what they were  
19 going to do to them. We got it worked out but  
20 it's like, you know you got a couple hundred  
21 people and they're going to shut them down and  
22 bankrupt them and San Francisco's dumping a  
23 billion gallons of raw sewage into the Bay?

24 MR. WHEELER: 1.5 billion gallons --

25 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] Sorry,

1 a billion and a half gallons of raw sewage.

2 What are?

3 MR. WHEELER: Into the ocean.

4 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: Well, yeah, okay.

5 MR. WHEELER: Yes, we're, we are and I would  
6 say the State of California is helping us with  
7 this effort. We're trying to impose a new  
8 permit on the city and the city has objected and  
9 appealed the new permit to our Environmental  
10 Appeals Board. So right now they are still  
11 allowed to dump the sewage that they're dumping  
12 --  
13

14 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] Who  
15 lets them dump it?

16 MR. WHEELER: -- while the new permit goes  
17 through the appeals process.

18 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: Can they delay that  
19 process --

20 MR. WHEELER: [Interposing] Yes --

21 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: -- and game the  
22 system --

23 MR. WHEELER: -- they are doing that  
24 process.

25 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: How do they do that?

1 MR. WHEELER: They've appealed it to our  
2 Environmental Appeals Board. So that process  
3 has to work through, before we can impose  
4 tighter limits on --

5 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] What  
6 kind of timeline can that be?  
7

8 MR. WHEELER: We're trying to speed that up.  
9 We actually have a proposal out that we're  
10 taking comments on reforming our Environmental  
11 Appeals Board. But sometimes those cases can  
12 take months to a year or two.

13 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: Oh. Huh. On your --  
14 brownfields was a big issue in this, in this  
15 committee in the last Congress. In fact Mr.  
16 Tonko and I worked together on modernizing the  
17 brownfields program and getting more grants out  
18 to communities. You may have talked about this  
19 while I was up at the other hearing but what  
20 kind of success are you achieving and your team  
21 at EPA on brownfield cleanup?

22 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: We are achieving, I  
23 believe, a lot of success there. As I mentioned  
24 earlier we, of our 165 brownfields grants last  
25 year 108 went to opportunity zones. And that,

1 and what I did last year was actually ask all of  
2 my regional administrators to go out and hold  
3 press conferences in the communities that  
4 received the grants instead of just putting out  
5 a press release announcing all the grants  
6 because when we highlight the fact that we're  
7 investing in these communities that will  
8 hopefully encourage other people to take a  
9 second look at these communities --

11 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] Right.

12 MR. WHEELER: -- and invest in those  
13 communities as well. So for example when I  
14 personally went up to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
15 last year to announce a brownfields grant there,  
16 we had three TV stations, local TV stations --

17 CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] Right.

18 MR. WHEELER: -- there covering it. And I'm  
19 hopeful that the local people in that community  
20 are going to look at that location and say if  
21 the EPA is investing money to clean up this  
22 facility maybe we should take a look at that  
23 same neighborhood. So I think the opportunity  
24 zones has been an incredible success and  
25 hopefully will spur a lot more private sector

investments in forgotten communities --

CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: [Interposing] Right.

MR. WHEELER: -- around the country.

CONGRESSMAN SCHRADER: I can tell you one of the biggest examples in my district is the old mill district in Bend, Oregon that was an old lumber mill. It was a brownfield site. They cleaned it up and now it is a thriving retail, recreation, an incredible place right around the Deschutes River. I'd love to have you come out and see it sometime and we'll get you out to Oregon. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I yield back.

CHAIRMAN FRANK PALLONE, JR.: The gentleman yields back.

[END RECORDING]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Laura L. Springate certify that the foregoing transcript of Fiscal Year 2021.mp3 was prepared using standard electronic transcription equipment and is a true and accurate record to the best of my ability. I further certify that I am not connected by blood, marriage or employment with any of the parties herein nor interested directly or indirectly in the matter transcribed.

*Laura L. Springate*

Signature: Laura L. Springate

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