

EPA chief set to meet privately with chemical industry execs

November 4 2017, by Michael Biesecker

The Trump administration's top environmental regulator is set to speak privately to chemical industry executives next week during a conference at a luxury oceanfront golf resort.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt is listed as the featured speaker at a board meeting of the American Chemistry Council, a group that has lobbied against stricter regulations for [chemical](#) manufacturers. The three-day conference is being held at The Sanctuary resort on Kiawah Island, South Carolina.

Council spokeswoman Anne Kolton said Pruitt's speech will not be open to the public or the news media. Admission to the members-only event where Pruitt is speaking ranges between \$7,500 and \$2,500, depending on sponsorship level. Rooms at the resort are being offered to conference attendees at a discounted rate of \$389 a night, not including taxes and fees.

Travel and lodging expenses for Pruitt, four aides and his security team will be borne by taxpayers.

EPA spokesman Jahan Wilcox declined to provide an estimate of the total cost for the trip, but said the government employees would be staying for \$135 a night, within the limit allowed under federal travel reimbursement rules.

Registration fees for Pruitt and his staff were waived since the EPA

administrator is an invited speaker. The [government employees](#) will not be participating in the golf events scheduled as part of the conference, Wilcox said.

Corporate members of the American Chemistry Council include such [industry](#) giants Dow Chemical, DuPont, ExxonMobil, Chevron and Arkema.

A Republican lawyer who previously served as the attorney general of Oklahoma, Pruitt railed against federal environmental regulations he considers too restrictive on the petrochemical industry. Following his appointment to lead EPA, Pruitt has repeatedly intervened to reverse or delay implementation of regulations opposed by chemical and pesticide makers.

Pruitt overruled the recommendation of his agency's own scientists to ban the Dow pesticide chlorpyrifos after federal scientists concluded it can interfere with the brain development of fetuses and infants. Pruitt also delayed by until at least 2019 Obama-era rules that would have tightened safety requirements for companies storing large quantities of dangerous chemicals after the industry opposed the regulations.

Pruitt has also named chemical industry insiders to key posts within EPA overseeing chemical and pesticide safety. EPA's top public affairs official, Liz Bowman, worked until March as the director of issue and advocacy communications for the American Chemistry Council.

Though past EPA administrators have met privately with industry representatives, Pruitt has crisscrossed the country to meet with top executives of industries his agency regulates. Unlike past EPA leaders, Pruitt's speaking engagements are typically disclosed only after the fact and are rarely open to the public.

Wilcox said Pruitt's travel schedule is not disclosed ahead of time due to security concerns. His speaking engagement at the Chemistry Council event was revealed in an online agenda posted by the group and first reported by The Washington Post.

EPA's inspector general is reviewing Pruitt's frequent taxpayer-funded trips, which often include weekend layovers at his home in Oklahoma, to determine whether they adhere to federal travel policies.

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