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On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose over 900 congregations across North America encompass 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which represents over 2,000 Reform rabbis, we submit these questions regarding the nomination of Scott Pruitt as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. We urge Committee Members to make use of them during the nomination hearing.

The Reform Movement is the largest denomination in American Jewish life and is committed to protecting the environment and all those who inhabit it. We strongly support both domestic and international action to address the crisis of climate change. Our tradition calls on us to be responsible stewards of the earth: "See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it" (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah). We know that we must take significant actions to address climate change, and to protect the environment and our planet's natural beauty and resources.

We recognize the harmful impact that burning fossil fuels has on our earth. And we are compelled by the urgency of a changing climate to adapt to the ongoing climate crisis and mitigate its effects in the future. The United States, as one of the top two national contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, has an important international leadership role in accomplishing these goals. Doing so is especially important in terms of the ways in which climate change disproportionately affects low income and communities of color both at home and around the world.

1. The Environmental Protection Agency, founded in 1970, was set up to not only reverse and mitigate decades of environmental harm but also to ensure that government, industry and the public act to protect our environment and our dwindling natural resources.<sup>1</sup> What would be your first priorities as EPA administrator as they relate to upholding the EPA's mission?
2. The EPA's ability to regulate carbon as a pollutant through programs such as the Clean Power Plan, is essential to slowing the damaging effects of climate change. You are among the state attorneys general currently challenging the Clean Power Plan in the District Court of the District of Columbia. Cutting greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants is crucial to addressing climate change because they are the single largest source of emissions driving climate change. In an amicus brief filed in the case *West Virginia et al. v. EPA*, 20 climate scientists wrote, "We view the Clean Power Plan, and its promise as an effective tool for reducing one of the primary sources of anthropogenic carbon, as a welcome tool for preventing and reducing the negative

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<sup>1</sup> [Environmental Protection Agency, "EPA History," 2016.](#)

impacts of human-caused climate change.”<sup>2</sup> As EPA Administrator, how do you plan to regulate harmful emissions to protect the environment?

3. The practice of hydraulic fracturing, used to produce natural gas from shale formations, can pose significant dangers to the environment and communities located near oil drilling sites. The United States Geological Survey found that wastewater injection, a key step in the process of fracking, can sometimes cause damaging earthquakes.<sup>3</sup> A study from the EPA found that fracking negatively affects drinking water resources in some circumstances.<sup>4</sup> In your home state of Oklahoma, a recent rise in destructive earthquakes linked to hydraulic fracturing prompted a significant shutdown of disposal wells.<sup>5</sup> Do you support regulations on hydraulic fracturing? As Administrator of the EPA, would you continue the EPA’s practice of working with states to regulate this potentially harmful and dangerous practice?
4. Our Jewish tradition commands us to steward the earth; in Genesis 2:15, God tells Adam “to till and tend to the earth.” While you have insisted otherwise, a majority of scientists agree that human activity contributes to climate change.<sup>6,7</sup> Humanity is already witnessing and experiencing the effects of climate change around the world in the form of extreme weather, sea level rise, drought, flooding, contaminated air and water and an increase in vector-borne illnesses.<sup>8</sup> These effects, most widely felt by poor communities and communities of color, will only get worse if we do not take action to drastically reduce carbon emissions. Yet as Oklahoma’s Attorney General, you joined lawsuits challenging EPA regulations designed to address climate change.<sup>9</sup> How will you meet the challenges of climate change, accepted by the overwhelming consensus of expert scientists, and mitigate its effects on the most vulnerable at home and abroad? In what ways will your record in lawsuits that challenge regulations issued or proposed by the EPA factor into your administration of the agency?

#### *International Climate Agreements*

5. It is the stated mission of the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure that “the United States plays a leadership role in working with other nations to protect the global environment.”<sup>10</sup> The EPA Administrator serves as a cabinet-level position, working closely with the President on all environmental issues. President-elect Donald Trump has asserted that climate change was “created by and for the Chinese” and has wavered on his

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<sup>2</sup> [Brief of Amicus Curiae Climate Scientists, 2016.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [United States Geological Survey, “Induced Earthquakes.”](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Environmental Protection Agency, “Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Gas: Impacts from the Hydraulic Fracturing Water Cycle on Drinking Water Resources in the United States,” 2016.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [CNN, “Oklahoma orders shutdown of 37 wells after earthquake,” 2016.](#)

<sup>6</sup> [National Review, “Obama administration lawlessly rewards its supporters and punishes its enemies,” 2016.](#)

<sup>7</sup> [IOP Science, “Consensus on Consensus: A synthesis on consensus estimates on human-caused global warming,” 2016.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [NASA, “Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet.”](#)

<sup>9</sup> [New York Times, “Energy Firms in Secretive Alliance with Attorneys General,” 2014.](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Environmental Protection Agency, “Our Mission and What We Do.”](#)

position on the Paris Climate Agreement.<sup>11,12</sup> Pulling out of this historic international agreement would be detrimental to progress towards addressing climate change, as well as cost the United States credibility on the international stage when it comes to leading the world's response to climate challenges. How will you advise the President-elect on implementing key elements of the Paris Agreement?

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<sup>11</sup> [Twitter, Donald J. Trump, 2012.](#)

<sup>12</sup> [The Guardian, "Paris climate deal: Trump says he now has an 'open mind' about accord," 2016.](#)