

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 16, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) evaluate the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) air quality monitoring networks for ambient and hazardous air pollutants. These networks play a critical role in protecting public health, especially for children, seniors, and members of other vulnerable populations and disadvantaged communities with chronic and acute health problems such as asthma.

The EPA operates multiple networks to monitor compliance with the Clean Air Act's National Ambient Air Quality Standards and to track hazardous air pollutants regulated under the act. These networks include the State and Local Air Quality Monitoring Network, the National Air Monitoring Network (which targets areas of high population density with a variety of air pollution sources), Special Purpose Monitoring Stations (used for short-term studies and other purposes), Photochemical Assessment Monitoring Stations (used to measure pollutants that contribute to ground-level ozone, a harmful air pollutant), and the National Air Toxics Trends Stations, among others.

These air quality monitoring networks are increasingly important in implementing and tracking compliance with the Clean Air Act, protecting public health, sharing monitoring data with other agencies, state and local governments, and the public, and informing policy decisions. Given the importance of these networks, we request that GAO respond to the following questions, with an emphasis on data quality, the siting and operation of monitors, trends in public health, the effects of air pollution on vulnerable populations, and shifts in the sources of air pollution, including those associated with vehicles, and industry:

1. What strategies does EPA use to deploy and operate its air quality monitoring networks?
2. What improvements, if any, are needed to guide EPA's air quality monitoring networks?
3. What is known about the performance of EPA's air quality monitoring networks with respect to the number and location of monitors, data quality, and the suitability of data for measuring progress toward air quality standards and other purposes?

Thank you for your assistance with this request. Should you have any questions about this request, please coordinate with Aaron Goldner (Senator Whitehouse) at (202) 224-2921, Laura Gillam (Senator Carper) at (202) 224-2441, and Olivia Kurtz (Senator Collins) at (202) 224-2523.

Sincerely,

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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan M. Collins", written over a horizontal line.

Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Carper", written over a horizontal line.

Tom Carper  
United States Senator