



Dear Supporter,

Betsy Southerland was sick at heart.

After a long and distinguished career at EPA, she was seeing not only her life's work dismantled but also public health and the environment put at greater risk. As she retired, she wanted to speak out.

PEER agreed to “cater” her retirement party in order that her departing words – warning of the “temporary triumph of myth over truth” in Scott Pruitt’s short tenure – would be [more than just a memo to file](#). We ensured they got [national coverage](#).



**Epitome of Public Service.** Elizabeth “Betsy” Southerland has a PhD in Environmental Science and Engineering. She served in both EPA’s Water and Superfund programs as a senior executive and Division Director. In 2015 she received the Distinguished Presidential Rank Award.

In response, the EPA press office issued a series of statements that were untrue. Some were [laughable](#) such as “We have a great working relationship with career EPA employees.”

But the EPA flaks also [lied](#) about Betsy, saying she had walked away with a “six-figure taxpayer-funded pension.” It was a falsehood they repeated for weeks, despite Betsy [correcting them](#).

But think about this for a second. Why did they choose this particular lie?

It is Pruitt's political team trying to discourage any other retiree or former employee from speaking out because they are signaling willingness to dredge up any incriminating fragment from a personnel file and spread it – Privacy Act be damned. And, as with Betsy, when they could find nothing they would just make something up.

What is made up does not even have to make sense –

- What does the size of her pension have to do with the truth of her statements?
- Didn't she earn a pension after 30-plus years of impeccable service?
- Does earning a pension forfeit your right to speak out?



This bunch is so rabid that they do not just attack their esteemed “colleagues,” they even go after [reporters whose coverage displeases them](#).

The real scandal is that tax dollars are supporting a nest of media jackals operating a political war room. PEER is now pushing back against this nasty fake news factory. [Help us](#).

Sincerely,



Jeff Ruch

Executive Director

**P.S. Speaking of Toxic.** Reversing decades of public health advisories, EPA has now declared that significant doses of radiation “[usually result in no harmful health effects](#).” The factual basis for this astounding about-face is unstated but we bet it stems from a field now ascendant at EPA – political science.

**P.P.S. Grounding Excessive Park Overflights.** PEER has launched a lawsuit to get the FAA to do the job it was commissioned to do by Congress back in 2000 – protect national park wildlife and visitors from [incessant, disruptive air tours](#). Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, for example, was buzzed by more than 15,000 hovering helicopters last year.

**P.P.P.S. Winky Zinke.** Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke’s [expensive charter flights](#) are not the only example of him expecting rock star treatment. PEER also documented him commandeering a Park Service boat for a [Gilligan-esque three-hour island tour](#).

Now it turns out that Zinke has [unearthed a secretarial flag](#) which is hoisted whenever he is “in garrison” (in the words of his spokesperson) at Interior Headquarters.

When he is out gallivanting about, a flag for [Deputy Secretary and lobbyist/swamp creature](#), David Bernhardt, is raised (a Mini-Me pennant). Maybe this is why Zinke is bothered that so many at Interior are not “[loyal to the flag](#).”

**P.P.P.P.S. How Do You Fix Ugly?** Our national parks are supposed to protect scenery but Yellowstone has allowed telecom companies to turn one of its most panoramic spots, Mt. Washburn, into a [hulking electronic bunker](#) with plans to make it much worse. At this rate, Yellowstone may just rename the peak Mt. Verizon.

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