

Thank you for your letter of February 5, 2004, to Administrator Leavitt concerning perchlorate contamination at Department of Defense facilities, and EPA's policies for handling Congressional inquiries. I appreciate this opportunity to respond to your concerns.

We respect the oversight role of Congress and make every effort to provide timely, thorough and accurate information in response to the numerous information requests we receive. Generally, requests that involve several Regional Offices or other requests from Committees are coordinated by EPA headquarters' Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations (OCIR). This is a longstanding practice that predates Governor Leavitt's appointment and this Administration. In keeping with this practice, several Regional Offices informed OCIR that your staff had called to request information on perchlorate. My staff immediately called Committee staff to obtain clarification on your request, and we asked the Regional Offices to refer any additional calls on this matter to headquarters.

It is extremely important in a large organization to issue precise and clear guidelines for collecting data from various individuals and offices. An ad hoc approach often results in unusable, inconsistent, or unreliable information. While we understood the general nature of your staff's inquiries (based on reports from our Regional Offices), we were unsuccessful in engaging your staff to obtain a better understanding of your needs. Your letter of February 5 has already helped clarify your request, and we have begun working on a response.

Finally, please be assured that there has not been and will not be any attempt to block Committee access to EPA experts. Any requests for meetings or briefings will be facilitated by EPA's Congressional Affairs staff. You or your staff may contact me directly at (202) 564-5200 to further discuss your request.

Sincerely,

Dona DeLeon
Acting Associate Administrator