

## How Scott Pruitt Blew It: A List of Scandals That Led to the EPA Chief's Resignation

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The [resignation of EPA chief Scott Pruitt today](#) was a surprise—at least its timing was. Though popular for his pro-industry, anti-regulatory stance among Republican politicians, Pruitt's many alleged unethical and illegal acts Pruitt caused GOP allies to step away or even outright call for his resignation.

President Donald Trump announced Pruitt's ouster as a resignation, and didn't mention of any of the accusations.

However, the cumulative total of investigations may have [taken the toll on a president's attitude](#) who likes "winners" and promised to "drain the swamp." Or it may just have been [Fox news host Laura Ingraham's July 3 tweet](#), "Pruitt is the swamp. Drain it."

Officially, Pruitt faced 16 investigations, one of which was concluded and found that [he broke the law](#). Democratic congresspeople, government ethics organizations, and congressional committees have asked for additional investigations, filed lawsuits and challenges, and are conducting inquiries in many other issues.

Here are some of the biggest allegations against Pruitt, from newest to oldest by the date of disclosure.

Pruitt fired an aide after she refused to alter appointments on his calendar

An EPA scheduler was asked to delete and change information about past events on Pruitt's schedule, potentially in violation of federal law, [according to a report in the New York Times](#) on July 5. EPA lawyers made the aide aware that altering the records may be illegal. She told her bosses about the advice, and was fired a few days later. The *Times* says she was paid for six weeks after her end date, also apparently a federal crime. The EPA said changes were to make the calendar accurate after the fact.

While this matter isn't tied directly to Pruitt, the actions were allegedly taken by his then-deputy chief of staff Kevin Chmielewski and chief of staff Ryan Jackson. Chmielewski confirmed to the *Times* that the firing was for refusing to change the calendar.

Pruitt asked staff to find his wife a job with a salary of at least \$200,000

A former EPA policy administrator, Samantha Dravis, told congressional investigators on July 2 that Pruitt had asked her to help find Pruitt's wife a job and that the salary should be at least \$200,000, [the Washington Post reported](#).

Dravis declined to make at least one call to a political organization Pruitt once headed and she had worked for. Dravis did help Pruitt's wife find a contract elsewhere, the *Post* wrote.

She also reportedly agreed that Pruitt had asked subordinates to perform personal work, a violation of rules regarding official conduct. Both Dravis and Jackson, who also testified, allegedly told investigators Pruitt had pressed for first-class tickets or travel by private jet.

Pruitt used official channels to try to get a Chick-fil-A franchise for his wife

Just a few months after Pruitt began the EPA chief, he emailed the head of the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain [about a potential business opportunity](#), according to June 5 reporting by *The Washington Post*. When Pruitt spoke to someone in the company's legal department, he said he wanted his wife to obtain a much-coveted franchise from the company. Chick-fil-A confirmed the request to the *Post*.

Pruitt used secret email addresses instead of official ones

Two Democratic senators accused [Pruitt of conducting official business over non-official email](#) accounts to avoid Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests in a [an April 10 letter](#).

Republicans had criticized a previous Democratic EPA chief, Lisa Jackson, for her use of multiple email addresses. The EPA inspector general said in May that it would review Pruitt's email usage.

Pruitt used a loophole to award raises to staff without White House knowledge

Despite the White House telling Pruitt he couldn't offer high salaries to two of his closest aides, he used a loophole in the Safe Drinking Water Act to [boost their wages](#), according to an April report by *The Atlantic*—and kept it from the White House.

Pruitt rented a Washington, D.C. apartment at a steep discount from a lobbyist

One of the biggest scandals for Pruitt was the disclosure that [he'd paid \\$50 a night to rent an apartment](#) in Washington, D.C. that was owned by the wife in a couple who were both lobbyists. Her husband represented clients who had matters in front of the EPA.

While Pruitt and the EPA admitted to most of the facts, they denied any improprieties. And as Pruitt became more entrenched in the scandal, the details raised more ethical questions. For instance, Pruitt only paid for nights he stayed, and his daughter also rented a room at times. The arrangement was supposed to last briefly, but Pruitt was late paying his rent and [then overstayed his agreed lease for months](#) until his landlords changed the locks. His security detail at one point broke down a door when they couldn't reach him by phone, and [had to pay to repair it](#). (The payment was likely improper, too.)

Pruitt generated excessive travel spending by chartering flights and flying first class

Pruitt spent excessively on travel, including first-class tickets and chartered flights, the *Washington Post* first reported in February 2018. Many reports followed. The initial report found that Pruitt had spent \$90,000 in a single week in July 2018 on travel.

Pruitt [flew in luxury class on a non-U.S. airline](#), even though rules require government employees to fly on U.S. airlines; he [spent \\$40,000 on a trip to Morocco](#) about natural gas exports, a topic not in his office's purview; his staff [looked into a private-jet lease](#) at Pruitt's request (but abandoned it); and the EPA [spent \\$45,000 for staffers](#) to prepare for an Australian trip that never happened.

Pruitt had a \$43,000 soundproofed phone booth installed in his office

Pruitt's office [signed a \\$25,000 contract](#) in 2017 to have a soundproof booth installed in his office for phone calls, although no previous administrator required such an installation and it's not common among similar agencies. The bill was later [revised to \\$43,000](#) to include modifications and repairs required in the office.

This spending was investigated by the Government Accountability Office, which found in April 2018 that [Pruitt violated the Antideficiency Act](#), a law that requires Congress to be informed before the booth was authorized. However, as a cabinet official, punishments are deferred to the president, who issued none.

Pruitt ordered an excessive, unprecedented security detail

On taking office, Pruitt beefed up his security detail to a level never before used by an EPA official, and out of scale with other agency heads. Starting in September 2017, media reports discovered [that he had 24/7 security](#), which was unprecedented; that his detail members were [redirected from EPA criminal investigations](#); that [the head of his detail allegedly engaged](#) in a form of self-dealing or conflict of interest; that taxpayers paid for security [during personal trips to Disneyland and the Rose Bowl](#); and that staffers who questioned the need for round-the-clock security [were fired or reassigned](#).

## Other alleged ethical issues and conflicts of interest

The above cover actions Pruitt is alleged or proven to have taken that have nothing to do with his official job. But investigations and claims into Pruitt about other violations also abound. Here is a partial list:

- Pruitt appeared in an video for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, opposing a clean-water rule put into effect under the Obama Administration. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is investigating.
- Pruitt allegedly dismissed scientists from advisory boards and used political appointees to help select new members. The GAO is investigating.
- Former EPA policy administrator Dravis allegedly drew a salary for parts of three months during which she wasn't working. The EPA inspector general is investigating.
- [Pruitt reportedly hired lobbyists](#) in apparent violation of a Trump order regarding ethics and recent lobbying.
- Pruitt allegedly [gave a Superfund job to a banker](#) who had provided loans to Pruitt and whose bank had failed. The staffer, Albert Kelly, [resigned abruptly in May 2018](#).