



Gary Morton
President

Natasha Greaves
Executive Vice President

July 18, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Office of the Administrator
Mail Code 1101A
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

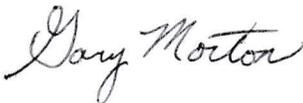
Dear Administrator Wheeler:

We are once again reminded that your administration does not serve EPA workers and our mission but instead will sacrifice workplace safety in the advancement of a political position that EPA must “re-open” offices whatever the reality is of the current COVID-19 pandemic in our country. So it was with no surprise that in the midst of bargaining EPA office re-opening Phases 1 and 2, your administration issued a plan for Phase 3 office re-opening. This so-called “guidance” was issued during a week in which conditions for COVID-19 are so out of control nationwide that not a single one of EPA’s 126 locations meet the criteria for moving forward in the Agency’s gating process. The Phase 3 guidance was issued as if COVID-19 was not out of control, as if the country weren’t stumbling to recover from the gut-punch of 75,000 new cases daily and climbing, as if we were not grieving nearly 1,000 daily deaths - all due, at least in part, to overly ambitious re-opening plans.

The outlook is bleak for the Agency’s serious consideration of these life and death issues given the response to date in negotiations over the plans for Phases 1 and 2. Even today, AFGE has not even received Agency counter-proposals to core issues in the first phases, to which we have been told we must respond by noon on Monday. All this while we now try to wrap our minds around a Phase 3 guidance that could be implemented in certain locations in barely two weeks time. When AFGE indicated its intention to exercise its right to bargain over the Phase 3 guidance, the Agency nonsensically claimed that the bargaining we were in for Phases 1 and 2 - that was nearly over - had actually been for all three phases. Like most acts of bad faith, this doesn’t even make sense! How could the union have bargained over a document that wasn’t even issued until 7 PM on the eve of the last day of bargaining?

As Kayleigh McEnany stated Thursday, President Trump won't "let science stand in the way" of reopening. We at EPA are an agency of scientists and public health professionals - we cannot allow the science to continue to be ignored, particularly at the expense of our lives and the lives of those in our families and in our communities. On June 8, 2020, AFGE Council 238 called for a moratorium on sending teleworking EPA employees back into offices. We stand by that call which continues to be supported by science, and we demand that you put the brakes on the hasty, unsafe reopening of EPA offices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Morton".

Gary Morton, President,
AFGE Council 238