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## Senate committee investigates funding issues for EPA Superfund program

The Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Oversight held a hearing on June 10 to discuss the impacts of contaminated Superfund sites, as well as strategies to speed up the decontamination process in light of decreased funding for the program. The Superfund program at EPA is responsible for cleaning up abandoned hazardous waste sites under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA).

Subcommittee Chairman Cory Booker (D-NJ) noted the importance of the Superfund program, pointing out that over 11 million Americans live within one mile of a Superfund site. Senator Booker also highlighted the benefits of the program, including job creation, new tax revenue, and healthier communities. Subcommittee Ranking Member James Inhofe (R-OK) argued that the problem lies with the EPA's priorities, not with funding levels, and stated that the EPA must look at the most cost efficient way to carry out the decontamination process.

Witness Barry Breen, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator at the EPA, emphasized the number of "unfunded, ready-to-go, new sites." Cleanup processes at these sites will either be delayed or proceed at slower rates, as funding for the Superfund program is at its lowest level in 25 years.

Sen. Booker has proposed reinstating the "polluter pays" tax that expired in 1995, which would provide additional funding for Superfund programs through a tax on industries that produce hazardous materials.

Sources: E&E News, The Hill, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

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