

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2019

Mr. Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

We write to express our concern about the proposed closure of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 9 Laboratory in Richmond, California.

The Richmond Lab is a full-service analytical lab serving EPA Region 9, which assists the Region in its work in Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, the Pacific Islands, and 148 tribes. Its employees are highly-trained and skilled analytical staff including chemists, biologists, inspectors, and facility-support contractors. Their work contributes significantly to the work done by EPA in the region and across the country.

With the closure of the Richmond Lab, most of Region 9's lab services are being transferred to outside the Region to combine with an ORD lab in Corvallis, Oregon. While the Richmond Lab employees have been offered to relocate to Corvallis, many employees will choose instead to leave EPA rather than relocate. The Lab's employees have settled careers and families in the Bay Area, and financial responsibilities, family obligations, and medical needs would make an out-of-state move a significant hardship on these employees and their loved ones. Some are being forced to retire earlier than planned because the move to Corvallis is simply not feasible for their families. This closure appears to be yet another tactic to shrink the overall number of EPA employees, a move that is unfair to its dedicated civil servants and does an injustice to the American people.

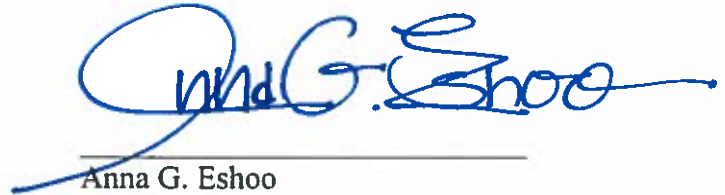
This move and subsequent departure of experts leaving the EPA will lead to a loss of significant institutional knowledge. Moving the Lab out of state – and out of the Region completely – disconnects the lab with the people and the Pacific Southwest region that they serve. Loss of career civil servants will result in "brain drain" that will prevent EPA Region 9 from being able to best serve the Pacific Southwest. Not only that, but the Region will also lose access to critical analytical capabilities, including the ability to access immediate analyses of air, water, and soil samples. This short-sighted move could end up requiring the outsourcing of critical lab work, which could be more costly and threaten the integrity of the work.

We respectfully request you re-review the decision to close the Richmond Lab and trust that it will receive the serious consideration it deserves. Thank you for taking the time to consider our thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



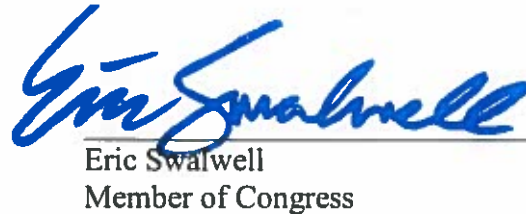
Doris O. Matsui
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney
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Jackie Speier
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Eric Swalwell
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Mike Thompson
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