

New EPA leader to rely on scientists in creating policies

Jan. 15 -- President-elect Barack Obama's choice to head the Environmental Protection Agency pledged to Senators that she would rely on the judgment of the agency's career scientists and independent advisers when making policy decisions.

"I understand that the laws leave room for policy-makers to make policy judgments, but if I am confirmed, political appointees will not compromise the integrity of EPA's technical experts to advance particular regulatory outcomes," Lisa Jackson told members of the Senate Environment Committee during her Jan. 14 confirmation hearing.

Jackson's assurances followed comments from committee Democrats, including Chairwoman Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., accusing the Bush administration of ignoring science in making decisions favorable to business interests.

Meanwhile, Republicans on the committee, including ranking member Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., said they fear the EPA under the Obama administration could attempt to use existing laws to expand the agency's regulatory authority in ways never envisioned by Congress.

One example cited by Republicans would be an attempt to use the Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Democrats on the committee, including Boxer, replied that the Supreme Court already has ruled the EPA may use the Clean Air Act to address carbon dioxide emissions.

Contact Waste & Recycling News senior reporter Bruce Geiselman at 330-865-6172 or bgeiselman@crain.com