

## EPA

### Closed doors when agency meets with state regulators

Corbin Hiar, E&E News reporter

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EPA headquarters in Washington. EPA/Flickr

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A state regulators group announced today that EPA officials would take part in its fall meeting, but only in closed-door sessions.

The Environmental Council of the States event will take place in Stowe, Vt., over four days in late August.

Registration fees are waived for journalists but begin at \$675 for ECOS members. Others interested in attending the 25-year-old nonprofit's conference could have to pay as much as \$875 to attend.

ECOS, which includes members from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, also offers sponsorship packages for businesses or organizations that start at \$5,000.

Yet it appears that not everyone who registers to attend or sponsor the conference is welcome to sit in on sessions with EPA representatives. They are slated to headline three events, all of which are open only to state and EPA officials, according to a [draft agenda](#) that ECOS posted online this morning.

The closed EPA sessions are to discuss "cooperative federalism oversight," "state-U.S. EPA discussions" and a roundtable on "Cooperative Federalism 2.0 progress and work ahead, as well as joint PFAS activities," the agenda says.

The practice is not new, Sambhav "Sam" Sankar, ECOS's executive director and general counsel, said in a phone interview late this afternoon, pointing to the agendas from previous meetings as evidence. Part of the organization's reason for being, Sankar said, is to allow for "free, open and frank discussions" between state regulators and EPA. In this case, he added, "we're not doing it at anybody's request."

EPA recently held a two-day summit on combating health risks associated with PFAS, a class of toxic nonstick chemicals formally known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

Some reporters, advocacy groups and members of Congress were shut out from portions of that event, raising questions about whether EPA is abiding by federal open meetings laws ([E&E News PM](#), May 23).

EPA spokespersons did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

But the agency has previously defended the legality of closing certain meetings with state officials to the public.

Alexandra Dunn, ECOS's previous executive director and general counsel, left the group in January to become head of EPA's Boston-based Region 1 office ([Greenwire](#), March 1).

Reporter Sean Reilly contributed.

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Twitter: [@corbinhiar](#) | Email: [chiar@eenews.net](mailto:chiar@eenews.net)

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