



## EPA shuffles citizen advocate within agency after irking Bush, Clinton officials

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By John Heilprin, Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration is reshuffling a congressionally established hazardous waste ombudsman whose office has been an irritant to both Republicans in Congress and the former Clinton White House.

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman announced Tuesday that Robert Martin, the national hazardous waste and Superfund ombudsman for citizen complaints, would be moved in January to the EPA's Inspector General's Office.

"I believe this will give the ombudsman more independence and the impartiality necessary to conduct credible inquiries," Whitman said.

Martin, however, says the move effectively abolishes his authority. "Transferring the ombudsman to the Office of Inspector General would give the false appearance of independence because of the very different missions of these offices," he said Tuesday in a memo to Whitman.

Martin and his former chief investigator, Hugh Kaufman, also pointed to a Labor Department ruling Tuesday that the Clinton EPA should not have prohibited Kaufman from helping Martin investigate complaints. Kaufman's rewritten job description relegated him to policy studies. Kaufman had filed a whistleblower complaint with the Labor Department.

The Clinton administration had proposed reining in Martin and Kaufman, an EPA investigator since 1973, after they clashed with EPA officials by recommending stronger cleanups of Superfund hazardous waste sites in Colorado, Florida, and Ohio.

Martin and Kaufman also had run-ins with Bush political appointees over complaints from lawmakers about stalled cleanups.

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