

# Occupy protesters, alpacas in tow, call for EPA administrator's resignation

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Andrew Lapin/Govexec.com

More than 100 demonstrators and two alpacas marched to the Environmental Protection Agency headquarters Friday, the first day of a planned month long National Occupation of D.C. movement dubbed NOWDC.

A multitude of speakers outside the EPA spoke for an hour on social causes ranging from District of Columbia statehood to justice for Trayvon Martin, the unarmed Florida teenager shot dead by a neighborhood watch volunteer on Feb. 26.

A consistent thread throughout the assembly was the demand for EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to resign -- a call accompanied by charges that her agency did not treat employees properly or adequately protect the environment.

"Hey hey, ho ho, Lisa Jackson has got to go," the protesters chanted.

The demonstrators walked more than one mile from Washington's Franklin Square Park to EPA headquarters, led by NOWDC organizer Margaret Flowers and former EPA whistleblower Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, who helped secure passage of the 2002 Notification and Federal Employee Anti-Discrimination and Retaliation Act. Although the law helped secure more protections for federal whistleblowers, Coleman-Adebayo said during the rally that EPA continues to "discriminate against whistleblowers."

Referring to EPA as the "Environmental Betrayal Agency," Coleman-Adebayo said the agency "has betrayed the faith and the hope of the American people," adding that it had committed "crimes against humanity."

Increased whistleblower protection was a clear demand at the protest. Three other whistleblowers -- former EPA employee Susan Morris (who brought the alpacas), Lawrence Lucas of the Agriculture Department and Joe Carson of the Energy Department -- lashed out at Jackson, EPA and, more broadly, the U.S. government over failure to properly protect federal employees such as themselves.

The OccupyEPA speakers and protestors also called for increased nuclear regulation; an end to the practices of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, for oil and gas and manufacturing genetically modified organisms; and an end to housing regulations.

As for the alpacas, Morris to the DCist Website they just thematically fit the Occupy protests: "They're ecologically friendly, sweet and gentle," she said.

NOWDC has other federal agencies in its crosshairs as well. The movement planned to protest at the Education Department throughout this weekend. On April 24 the group expects to demonstrate at the Justice Department and U.S. Army base Fort Meade, Md., in support of Bradley Manning, the Army private charged with leaking hundreds of thousands of classified U.S. files to the website WikiLeaks.