

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

EPA Regulatory Overreach: Impacts on American Competitiveness
Full Committee Hearing

June 4, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately today's hearing is just a continuation of the same familiar theme we have heard in this Congress—resistance to the EPA's efforts to carry out its mission to protect the nation's environment and the public health—resistance that is unsupported by the scientific evidence.

It thus should not be a surprise that this hearing, like all the others on EPA's activities, will fail to offer any constructive solutions for lowering ozone or cutting carbon emissions. Instead, it will serve as one more platform for industry to voice its opposition to regulations that will make the air we breathe cleaner, the water we drink safer, and that will help address the looming challenge of climate change.

And while congressional oversight of EPA's activities is appropriate, the hearings held by this Committee have not met the standard of serious oversight. For example, this Committee has failed to bring in the expertise necessary to truly examine the research, policies, and technologies needed to confront the most important environmental issue of our time -- climate change. Instead, the so-called experts the Majority has brought before this Committee too often represent views from outside the mainstream of the scientific community or are industry opponents with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

It is puzzling to me that our Committee is going down such a path just as other nations and many in the business community are stepping up to address the challenge presented by climate change. Those nations and those businesses are looking to the United States government to provide leadership. Just last week, six major oil companies, including BP, Shell, and Total sent a letter to the United Nations recognizing climate change and the role of their companies in lowering carbon emissions. In the letter they state: "For us to do more, we need governments across the world to provide us with clear, stable, long-term, ambitious policy frameworks. This would reduce uncertainty and help stimulate investments in the right low-carbon technologies and the right resources at the right pace."

It is unfortunate that instead of contributing to the development of the long-term policies that these oil companies are asking Congress for, this Committee has too often become a forum for climate change denial.

With respect to today's hearing, it is clear that a cleaner environment and a strong economy are not mutually exclusive. Stricter pollution limits have historically led to innovation and the creation of new technologies that have wound up creating jobs while protecting our environment. I am confident American industry will continue that record of innovation and job creation as new environmental standards are adopted.

Finally, I am proud to say that I was a nurse before I entered politics. And I can think of no mission of the federal government that is more important or noble than EPA's mission to "protect human health and the environment." I look forward to Dr. Paulson's testimony on the public health benefits of the environmental regulations we will be discussing today.

In closing, I look forward to the day when this Congress and this Committee will step back from the counterproductive opposition to EPA's efforts to carry out its statutorily mandated mission. It is not a good use of our time, and I hope that we can instead come together to advance our economy and a cleaner environment and healthier public.

Mr. Chairman, before I yield back I'd like to enter into the record the letter that I mentioned in my remarks. Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.