



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Full Committee Hearing

Strengthening Transparency or Silencing Science? The Future of Science in EPA Rulemaking

November 13, 2019

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Transparency and reproducibility are an important part of ensuring the quality of the science that supports federal regulations. By providing access to research data, scientists can replicate previous results to assure validity, relevance, and accuracy.

We all want federal agencies to rely on the best available science when making policy. And I believe that we need a broader conversation on the best way for the federal government to conduct and use transparent science that can be independently validated.

Unfortunately, this hearing is narrowly focused on one proposed rule from one agency.

This is about attacking the EPA under the current administration—not about improving transparency and scientific integrity. I believe this is a missed opportunity to have a more holistic, productive discussion on an important topic.

Ensuring that government research is transparent and can be independently verified is not a new goal. The Obama Administration issued memos on the need to promote public access to scientific information and include the underlying data for policy decisions.

So in 2018, the EPA issued “Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science,” a rule that would prioritize these efforts.

I think this is a laudable goal. After all, if taxpayers are expected to follow costly regulations, they should be able to trust that they stem from the best available science that can be independently verified.

If federal agencies are relying on data that can’t be used for future research, it’s impossible to know if the initial results were obtained by accurate science or simply by chance.

I believe the EPA’s proposed rule is well-intentioned, but there is still work to be done. That’s why I was pleased to hear Administrator Wheeler confirm that the agency is currently working on a supplemental rule for this topic.

And while today's hearing will focus on the proposed rule, which was issued by the previous EPA Administrator, we already know this won't be the final proposal from the agency.

So why are we holding a hearing on the original proposed rule that will be irrelevant in just a month or so?

What's worse, Dr. Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta, who joins us from the EPA today, will be unable to comment on the development of the proposed rule, as she did not serve in the relevant office at the time it was issued. And because the supplemental rule is currently in the drafting process, Dr. Orme-Zavaleta is also unable to comment on its specific requirements, or details.

It is my understanding that once it's released, the supplemental rule will receive its own comment period, and then move through the regular implementation process.

I can't help but think this hearing would be more productive if we had waited for the supplemental rule to be published, and then provided our comments and direction on the most current proposal.

In closing, I'd like to again emphasize that I think we could have a much more productive hearing if we had a broader discussion about the best way to improve reproducibility and transparency.

I also want to say that if we can't improve the transparency of underlying data, then Congress should do our job and authorize the funding necessary to update and replicate vital research in a more transparent manner.

I'm hopeful that our second panel today can address the broader issue of transparency in science. I am particularly interested in testimony from Dr. David Allison on behalf of the National Academies of Science, who recently completed a study on reproducibility initiated by this Committee.

I'm also pleased to welcome Dr. Brian Nosek, who joins us from the Center for Open Science, and is currently exploring ways to facilitate and encourage transparency in the research community from the ground up.

I look forward to hearing about constructive ideas on how policymakers and agencies can balance reproducibility with the need to protect individual privacy and maintain data security.

I thank our witnesses for taking the time to appear before us today and I hope we can have an open and productive conversation on the broad issue of transparency in science. I yield back, Madam Chair