U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Hearing:
Detecting and Quantifying Methane Emissions from the Oil and Gas Sector
June 8, 2022

Thank you to everyone for joining us today to discuss a topic with enormous implications for the future of our planet.

We are here to consider methane leaks from the oil and gas sector. Specifically, we are going to talk about the science of methane leaks, and how that science can be applied to characterize oil and gas methane emissions on a large scale and inform mitigation efforts.

The importance of doing so cannot be overstated. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas. Reducing atmospheric methane levels is an important way to slow the rate of climate change in the short-term and buy ourselves more time to implement long-term climate policies.

There is broad agreement among scientists that reducing methane emissions from oil and gas operations is the simplest, most cost-effective, and most technically feasible methane emissions reduction option at this time. Oil and gas sector emissions are the low-hanging fruit of methane mitigation. We can take action today to solve this problem.

Unfortunately, the oil and gas sector has a long way to go to rein in methane leaks. An investigation conducted by the Democratic staff of the Committee has concluded that oil and gas companies are not taking the actions that are needed to achieve large-scale methane reductions. The staff investigation found that the companies are failing to address super-emitting methane leaks, neglecting the use of methane quantification data, and deploying innovative methane detection technologies too slowly and too inconsistently.

If America is to reach its methane reduction targets and live up to its climate promises such as the Global Methane Pledge, oil and gas sector methane mitigation must be informed by science. The oil and gas sector must do a better job of adopting science-based approaches to solve its methane leak problem.

Science lies at the heart of everything this Committee does, and today will be no exception. Our witness panel features some of the country's leading experts on methane emissions from the oil and gas sector, and I am grateful for their participation. They can help us understand the threat posed by methane leaks, how to effectively confront them, where our knowledge gaps are, and the potential for innovative technologies to be a part of the solution.

We must also consider how the Federal scientific enterprise can play a more active role in improving our understanding and strengthening our capabilities for dealing with methane leaks. Research programs across the Federal government have the potential to engage constructively with industry and with the scientific community. Together they can advance knowledge and develop tools for oil and gas sector methane emissions. Today we will explore where Federal research investments are most needed.

There are many dimensions to the issue of oil and gas sector methane leaks. If we listen to the science, and if we allow ourselves to be guided by it, we will equip ourselves with everything we need to make informed decisions. I look forward to a vigorous discussion.

I now yield to Ranking Member Lucas.