



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

Opening Statement

**Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)**

Full Hearing:

*“Chemistry Competitiveness:  
Fueling Innovation and Streamlining Processes to Ensure Safety and Security”*

January 8, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Babin. I welcome the opportunity, one year into the Trump Administration’s scorched earth assault on environmental protection, to discuss what is happening at EPA. I do want to note that we are halfway through this Congress and not a single EPA official has testified before the Committee. Not one. A core responsibility of Congress is to hold the executive branch accountable, and the political leadership at EPA has much to account for. I hope that this hearing will soon be followed by another one in which this Committee can hear directly from Administrator Zeldin and hold him accountable for his disastrous leadership.

It has been a catastrophic year for EPA, for our environment, and for the public health and safety of the American people. Over the past 12 months, EPA’s workforce has been gutted as thousands of employees were pushed out of the agency. Critical laboratories, such as the Human Research Facility at the University of North Carolina, have been shut down.

Climate denialism is ascendant: Administrator Zeldin speaks of “driving a dagger straight into the heart of the climate-change religion,” while references to climate change are erased from agency websites and the agency moves to repeal the Endangerment Finding that underpins greenhouse gas regulations. Virtually every environmental standard under the sun is set to be weakened, from particulate matter and mercury in the air we breathe to PFAS in the water we drink. Time and time again, the agency has elevated the interests of corporate polluters over the public. This EPA has abandoned its mission and forsaken its obligation to protect the environment and public health.

On top of it all, independent science at EPA has been wiped out. In a tragic loss for the country, the Trump Administration has eliminated the EPA Office of Research and Development, which was the beating heart of science at the agency virtually since its creation. ORD provided independent, unbiased, cutting-edge environmental research to ensure that the agency was equipped with the best available science. Now it is gone. EPA tried to obscure this evisceration of agency science by inventing a new quote “applied science” office, but it is barely one-third the size of ORD and conveniently located within the Office of the Administrator, where undesirable science is far more vulnerable to political interference.

These changes essentially remove independent science from decision-making at EPA.

But don't take my word for it: the Senate Appropriations Committee, on a bipartisan 26-2 vote, declared itself "appalled" at the elimination of ORD and expressed concern about "the immeasurable risk to our health and environment that would come from undermining EPA's ability to clean up hazardous chemicals, respond to disasters, and support states and Tribal Nations with sound, actionable science." And two leaders of ORD under Republican administrations, Dr. Paul Gilman and Dr. Jennifer Orme-Zavaleta (Orm Zah-vuh-let-a), have submitted a letter for this hearing in which they express concern that the dismantling of ORD "will be detrimental to research innovation... and further hinder the efforts of the chemical industry to innovate." Both sides of the aisle can agree: a future without ORD is a bleak future indeed. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to enter this letter from Dr. Gilman and Dr. Orme-Zavaleta into the record.

Today's hearing is focused on chemical processes at EPA. The elimination of ORD will undoubtedly make these processes worse. Without independent science to support agency decision-making, EPA will struggle to craft health-protective chemical regulations. Instead, the agency is far more likely to be unduly influenced by industry-backed science, or to simply lack the scientific data necessary to make informed decisions altogether.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today.

We need to have an honest conversation about what is happening at EPA, especially regarding environmental research and development where the Science Committee has absolute jurisdiction. After a year of damage and destruction, it is time for us to start thinking about how to rebuild independent science at EPA and restore it to its rightful place. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.