

Opening Statement
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Joint Hearing – Subcommittee on Technology and Subcommittee on Research
Federal Efforts to Reduce the Impacts of Windstorms

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

June 5, 2013

Thank you, Chairman Buschon for holding today's hearing to examine the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program—or NWIRP.

The last few years have been devastating years for natural disasters in this country. We experienced the deadliest and most destructive tornado season in U.S. history in 2011. Unfortunately, the trend is continuing this year with massive tornadoes in Oklahoma and in my state of Texas. We've also had earthquakes in areas that don't usually experience earthquakes, including Virginia and Oklahoma. And, Hurricanes Sandy and Irene caused widespread destruction and death along the Eastern seaboard.

This Committee has an important role to play in minimizing the number of Americans who are harmed or killed by natural disasters or who have to face the challenge of rebuilding their homes, businesses, and communities.

By reauthorizing the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program, we can reduce the vulnerability of our communities to disasters. Therefore, I am glad my fellow Texan, Congressman Neugebauer, has been a champion for NWIRP and that he introduced legislation to reauthorize this important program.

However, I want to express my support for the legislation recently introduced by Congresswoman Wilson, of which I am a co-sponsor. The *National Hazards Risk Reduction Act of 2013* would reauthorize both the wind-related program and the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program.

I believe we need to take a multi-hazards approach to disaster mitigation, and Ms. Wilson's legislation would link these two critical programs through the establishment of a single interagency coordinating committee—creating opportunities for synergy among the various research activities.

I also don't believe we should prioritize one hazard program over another as they are all important to producing communities that are resilient to any and all disasters. As a result, I hope that as we move forward with legislation we consider all of the hazard programs within the Committee's jurisdiction.

And finally, it is clear that the NWIRP agencies have not gotten the resources they need to carry out all of the responsibilities assigned to them by Congress. Thus, I am concerned by the cuts proposed in the legislation that is the topic of today's hearing. We simply can't afford to have these agencies miss opportunities to implement low-cost mitigation measures. In the end, strong and effective hazard reduction programs will not only save lives and property, but also provide us with meaningful cost savings.