

OPENING STATEMENT
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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Environment
“Expanding the Role of States in EPA Rulemaking”
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Environmental protections that limit damage to the environment and protect the public from toxic exposures should be based on solid scientific evidence. Five decades ago a Republican President established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure this was the case. Some of us still remember that the EPA was created because the States were not doing a good job in regulating private industries and in safeguarding the health and safety of their residents.

In the years and decades before the EPA was established, rivers were literally catching fire because of flammable chemicals dumped into them, smog engulfed the air in certain cities exacerbating health ailments, and children played in urban areas immersed with toxic chemicals.

Richard Nixon established the EPA to assist State environmental agencies by providing them with the scientific research necessary to successfully carry out their mission to protect the public. He believed a federal scientific agency was needed to help the nation address critical environmental issues because he knew they could not be successfully addressed with each State acting alone. In his message to Congress in July 1970, President Nixon said the EPA was needed *“to make a coordinated attack on the pollutants which debase the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land that grows our food.”*

Certainly, environmental problems still exist. However, as a nation – together – we have made steady progress in addressing them. These achievements have been made by relying on credible environmental science that has helped to enlighten policymakers and politicians alike in order to help develop constructive policies and reasonable regulations to protect the public. But abandoning this responsibility will not help protect the environment or improve the public’s health. Rather, it will turn the clock back fifty years.

Many of the proposed environmental policies and regulations coming from this Administration and the Science Committee Majority have already put us on a road back to a time when industries polluted unimpeded, the public suffered and politicians stayed silent. I’m concerned that today, the Trump Administration is attempting to silence federal scientists and offer alternative facts rather than scientific evidence.

The decision by EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt earlier this month to not renew nine of the 18 members of the Agency’s Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) is just the latest example of this Administration’s efforts to silence scientists. The EPA has also scrubbed references to climate change from its websites and the Administrator recently ignored the research findings of EPA’s own scientists who recommended banning a toxic chemical (*Chlorpyrifos*) and instead sided with the insecticide’s manufacturer.

We are fortunate that Dr. Deborah Swackhamer is here today to provide us with her perspective on these unfortunate events. Dr. Swackhamer, a Professor Emerita of Science, Technology, and Public Policy as well as a Professor Emerita of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Minnesota brings a wealth of scientific expertise to the table. She is also the current Chair of the EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors and the former Chair of the EPA's Science Advisory Board. Although she is testifying today in her personal capacity as a scientific expert and not representing any of the EPA's science advisory boards, I am glad she has decided not to stay silent. I look forward to hearing her perspective on how the federal government can rely on science to develop appropriate environmental policies and regulations.

In closing, I would remind my colleagues that the EPA was created by a Republican President to preserve the environment and protect the public's health, not the profits of private corporations. The EPA's fundamental mission, however, appears to be under attack. The efforts to alter the EPA's mission, downgrade its legal authority, and silence its scientists will endanger the public and threaten the environment. However, history has proven repeatedly that science cannot be silenced. Scientific facts are supported by evidence, not opinions. Distorting or dismissing scientific facts does not alter scientific knowledge. I hope that this Committee, this Congress, and this Administration can get back to basic principles of good governance where science forms a solid bedrock that helps to educate policymakers and inform their public policy choices.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. Thank you Chairman Biggs. I yield back.