

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)**  
**of the Subcommittee on Environment**

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Environment

*“State Perspectives on Regulating Background Ozone”*

June 21, 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Clean Air Act is one of the most successful pieces of public health legislation enacted by Congress. The protections helped avoid more than 200,000 premature deaths in its first 20 years alone. A clean environment is essential to a high quality of life for every American. It is important to consider the health effects of weakened air standards, particularly for children, the elderly and those suffering from asthma.

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards, or NAAQS, were established under the Clean Air Act to regulate criteria pollutants that have significant negative effects on human health. Congress made sure that public health was the driving factor in setting the NAAQS by requiring the standards to be based on exclusively on scientific, health-based evidence.

Since 2008, The Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee has recommended setting the ozone standard between 60 and 70 parts per billion. In 2015, the ozone NAAQS were strengthened to 70 parts per billion. Public health groups were concerned that the new level was not as protective as it could have been, but acknowledged the positive health outcomes the new standard would have for all Americans.

Some states and localities argue that meeting the 2015 ozone NAAQS levels is impossible because of background or naturally occurring ozone levels, but that is simply not true. The EPA determined that background ozone levels remain relatively constant, and contribute only fractionally to ozone concentrations above the 70 parts per billion level on high ozone days. The EPA also recently revised their Exceptional Events Rule and Guidance to more clearly define the scope of the rule to help states and localities identify air quality monitoring data that may be affected by exceptional events.

I would like to thank our witnesses for being here today. I am glad to see Dr. Elena Craft back at the witness table to provide us with a scientific perspective not only on issues related to ozone, but also to discuss how the anti-science actions this Administration has taken at the EPA will undermine public health protections if left unchallenged.

I would also like to draw attention to the fact that it has been one year and four months since Scott Pruitt was confirmed as the EPA Administrator. In that time, the Democratic members of this Committee have sent multiple letters to Chairman Smith requesting the Administrator’s presence at the witness table. The Ranking Member of the full Committee and I have both requested, on the record, during Committee hearings that Administrator Pruitt be asked to testify in front of the Science Committee, only to be told that we could invite him ourselves. We did; in

fact I invited Administrator Pruitt to participate in today's hearing as the Minority witness, but he rejected our request.

This Committee is doing a disservice to the American people by not having the EPA Administrator testify to explain his anti-science agenda and explain the actions he is taking that will undermine public health and the environment. This is especially egregious considering that this Committee has jurisdiction over the EPA, and that Administrator Pruitt has found the time to testify in front of other congressional committees multiple times.

The EPA Administrator and Committee Chairman are touting the need for more transparency in science at the EPA. It seems that Administrator Pruitt's testimony in front of this Committee would be a key part of fulfilling that goal. It is our job to monitor Agency activities to make sure they are consistent with congressional intent, and we should not abdicate our responsibility to hold this Administration accountable.

I sincerely hope this Committee decides to fulfill its duty to conduct congressional oversight of the EPA's science programs to make sure the Agency meets its mandate to protect public health and the environment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and with that I yield back.