

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Environment
“State Perspectives on Regulating Background Ozone”
June 21, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Biggs. I also want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today to discuss their perspectives on air pollution regulations.

For the past several years, whenever the Majority has held a hearing on air pollution there has been one common thread. Virtually every hearing has highlighted one or more excuses as to why air pollution shouldn't be regulated. Today, we will hear about another excuse: background ozone. This isn't even a novel excuse. We held a hearing on this same topic just a few years ago.

One thing the Committee never seems to address is the public health effects of Americans breathing in air pollution. And those health effects are devastating. Disease, misery, and death. In addition to the severe bodily toll that air pollution takes on Americans, it also imposes a serious monetary cost. It is estimated that the EPA's 2015 Ozone regulations, which were only slightly more stringent than the previous standards, would result in hundreds of thousands of fewer asthma attacks in children every year. That would, in turn, result in over 100,000 less missed school days, which, in turn, would result in significantly increased productivity for the parents of those children. And that just deals with asthma. These regulations would also reduce COPD, cardiovascular disease, and other negative health effects.

The total health care savings from regulating ozone even slightly more stringently than before runs well into the billions of dollars every year. That should really come as no surprise to Members of Congress. Health care is very expensive. Rising health care costs are one of the primary drivers of our increasing national debt. As we work to address these issues, I think it makes more sense to cut the pollution that is helping to drive those health care costs higher, rather than cutting the health care treatments people need to survive.

I hope that the Minority witness, Dr. Craft can help highlight some of the reasons why it is so important to regulate air pollution in the first place. And I'm sure she can also address the rationale being offered today by our Majority for why we shouldn't be regulating pollution.

I'm from Texas, and we get plenty of cross border air pollution coming from our neighbors to the South. Quite frankly, we probably also send a little air pollution to our neighbors to the east. Every state has its own unique issues related to reducing air pollution. But I don't think that is an excuse to let people in Dallas or Houston or San Antonio get sick and suffer. I hope we can keep that in mind today as we talk about these compliance issues.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, and I yield back.