

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Oversight Subcommittee Hearing

"The Role of the White House Chief Technology Officer in the HealthCare.gov Website Debacle"

November 19, 2014

Mr. Chairman, I want to welcome Mr. Park, the former Chief Technology Officer of the United States, to this Committee hearing. I appreciate your willingness to appear before us, Mr. Park, and I want to apologize to you for all the political theater that is unfolding around your appearance.

Please keep in mind that this hearing is largely an excuse for the Majority to again express their dislike for the Affordable Care Act and the online-Marketplace that has let millions of Americans find medical coverage. I know that they do not like Obamacare—the Majority have voted in the House some 53 times during this Congress to repeal or dismantle the ACA. Nevertheless, I want to ask all Members here today to please remember that Mr. Park is not personally responsible for the ACA, nor is he responsible for the problems on October 1, 2013.

Mr. Park, it is clear that you were not responsible for how the website performed last October 1. In doling out responsibility for its performance on day one I think it's fair to assign you 0% of the responsibility, which reflects the degree of your actual involvement in developing the website.

Of course, your job at the White House put you in a position to have more insight than most into how the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services were doing in developing the program, but the management of the program was up to CMS. And the people doing the actual development work were contractors who legally answered to CMS. As I'm sure you would agree, insight into what is going on does not equate to being intimately involved or directly responsible for the website.

And of course your real job as CTO during that period had you leading multiple interagency initiatives designed to push technology out into the American economy and across society. For example, you were working to make U.S. government data more easily accessible by the public, which can spur innovation, profits, and jobs, as has been amply demonstrated by the way that publicly available National Weather Service data has spawned a multi-billion dollar weather forecasting industry.

Mr. Park, I think it is fair to say that fundamentally you were working to make services of the government more readily available to citizens during your tenure as CTO. You were working to help reduce information costs in various areas of the economy, notably your "green button" initiative to let consumers get a better idea about energy consumption and sourcing. You were facilitating dialogues across communities to bring experts on particular social issues face-to-face

with experts from the IT world. Laudably, you were a part of an initiative aimed at stopping human trafficking and another initiative designed to find ways to harness IT more effectively in disaster response.

I know that as I cite these examples, I am just scratching the surface of the scope of your day job as CTO of the United States. Regrettably, the Committee has made no effort to understand this broad portfolio or your accomplishments there, and has shown little appreciation for your patriotic desire to serve, even though it meant leaving the lucrative world of Silicon Valley IT start-ups and venture capital.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you for all you did and tried to do, including joining the team tasked with fixing the healthcare.gov site *after* October 1.

I hope your experience with this Committee won't diminish your sense of pride in your accomplishments or dampen your enthusiasm for public service. We need people like you to be willing to come serve the country.