



COMMITTEE ON

SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICANS

Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Ranking Member Roger Marshall
Environment Subcommittee Hearing
Opening Statement
“EPA Advisory Committees: How Science Should Inform Decisions”
July 16, 2019

Thank you for holding this hearing, Chairwoman Sherrill and Ranking Member Norman.

First and foremost, I'd like to address what seems to be the elephant in the room: President Trump's Executive Order on Federal Advisory Committees. While not explicitly stated as part of the purpose for this hearing, I think we can all see the majority's intention is to make this hearing a chance for former EPA advisory members to defend the charter of their committee.

As Mr. Norman mentioned, we all agree EPA's major advisory committees, especially the Science Advisory Board (SAB) and Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC), play a strategic role in carrying out the mission to protect human health and the environment.

No one is proposing we eliminate those panels or the critical input they provide to the agency.

But the President's Executive Order isn't focused on those, or any other committee authorized by Congress. It doesn't even direct agencies to keep or terminate any particular committee. It is focused on halting wasteful spending and improving the quality of our advisory committees government-wide.

President Trump's Executive Order directs each agency to review their advisory committees, eliminate one-third of their discretionary advisory committees, and caps the total number of discretionary committees at 350 across the federal government.

From what I've seen in the media, people take this to mean President Trump is trying to eliminate hundreds of advisory committees because he doesn't value the science they provide. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Executive Order clearly states that one-third of discretionary advisory committees should be eliminated. Discretionary advisory committees are those committees created by an agency head at some point, not through law or executive order. Based on the text of the Executive Order, EPA would need to eliminate just two committees to comply.

Next let's address the impact of capping the total number of discretionary committees at 350. Currently, there are just over 1,000 Federal Advisory Committees. Again, let's look at the actual words in the Executive Order, which state that the cap applies only to discretionary committees. At present, there are just over 400 discretionary committees. Eliminating 50 committees – especially after there has not been a systematic review in 26 years – does not seem like a daunting challenge to me.

I think it's important to note that President Reagan issued a memorandum similar to this in 1985, and President Clinton issued an executive order in 1993 requiring the exact same one-third elimination as President Trump. So historically, ensuring we are maximizing the use of our Federal Advisory Committees has been a bipartisan effort.

It is critical that we review advisory committees to ensure their alignment with the current needs and mission of each agency. Think of how science can change in just a few years. Twenty-six years ago, the first smartphone was still a decade away from introduction – and now everyone seems to always be on one. This executive order will help federal agencies reevaluate their needs and focus on the future of science, not the needs of the past.

The final issue I'd like to highlight is what appears to be a narrow and limiting scope of this hearing. The Science Committee has jurisdiction over \$42 billion in federal research and development, including numerous agencies with federal advisory committees.

If my colleagues in the majority were genuine about examining how science informs decisions at federal agencies, we would be hearing from representatives from other agencies like NASA, the Department of Energy, and the National Science Foundation. Each of these has its own advisory committees with unique needs and challenges. Narrowing the focus of this hearing to just the EPA, which only has 2% of all Federal Advisory Committees, is puzzling to me.

I'd also like to mention that the two EPA committees we will talk about the most today, SAB and CASAC, are authorized by statute and therefore ineligible to be eliminated by the EPA Administrator under the Executive Order.

I believe there is a need to conduct oversight of the 1,000 advisory committees currently in operation, as well as the \$400 million these committees cost the taxpayer each year.

I encourage my colleagues in the majority to work with us to conduct meaningful oversight of these committees and the best way to manage them efficiently and effectively. Instead, we find ourselves here today, focused on the smallest fraction of our Committee's jurisdiction.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.