COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE SPACE & TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Full Committee Hearing–Amplifying the Arctic: Strengthening Science to Respond to a Rapidly Responding Arctic

September 20, 2022

Good morning Chairwoman Johnson and thank you for holding today's hearing to examine our national R&D efforts in the Arctic.

The Arctic presents us with a variety of scientific and technical challenges and opportunities because of its unique environmental, geopolitical, and resource structure.

We're currently experiencing a period of unprecedented changes in all these areas, and our investments in foundational Arctic-related research will be critical to understanding and adapting to these changes.

In 2017, I had the opportunity to visit the Arctic and witness, first-hand, the research being conducted there, including at the Barrow Arctic Research Center.

One of the highlights of this trip was being outfitted in cold weather gear and touring Summit Station, a critical research facility at the summit of the Greenland Ice Sheet. This trip to the Arctic demonstrated to me the sensitivity of that environment to things like changing carbon dioxide levels.

The scientific data that is being collected at our Artic research centers and field stations are key to understanding the factors affecting the Arctic region's atmosphere, ocean, and sea ice over. And when we understand these changes, we can make informed decisions related to the region, the continental U.S., and the entire globe.

So I appreciate the great work being done by many of our agencies to further this understanding.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is conducting extensive data gathering and research activities through multiple programs, informing decision support for unique arctic hazards such as river ice breakup, fires, and coastal flooding.

NASA is gathering critical remote sensing observations with aircrafts and satellites to inform Earth system science and Arctic research modeling. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is supporting innovative, convergent research through its “Navigating the New Arctic Program.”

The United States is only one of eight Arctic nations, and as such, it has a critical role to play in the future of the region. This is especially true as we look at the economic, and geopolitical consequences from the rapid changes occurring in the Arctic.

Territorial disputes in this region are taking on greater importance as resource-rich land and new shipping routes are revealed. There are significant economic implications from the energy rights, mineral deposits, and tourism opportunities being uncovered.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the impact of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on international cooperation in the Arctic. Russia’s unprovoked invasion of Ukraine violated the core principles of sovereignty and I stand with the decision to suspend engagement in the Arctic Council.

As a result, the U.S. must leverage and expand our research partnerships with our Arctic and non-Arctic allies to ensure the U.S. remains a leader in the region.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how the research conducted in the Arctic plays a central role in understanding and addressing the key consequences of change in the region and how the U.S. can play a leading role in the new Arctic. Thank you for being here today, and I yield back the balance of my time.