

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

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Energy  
*“The Future of Low Dose Radiation Research”*  
November 1, 2017

Good morning and welcome to our witnesses. Thank you to Chairman Weber for holding this hearing to examine the future of low dose radiation research at the federal level.

This research is important to better understanding the health impacts of exposure to low doses of radiation that could result from medical tests, terrorism events, or materials associated with nuclear weapons and power production. Since its inception in 1998, the Low Dose Radiation Research Program at the Department of Energy had provided high-value scientific data to help determine these risks. In fact, just over a year ago the head of Biological and Environmental Research within DOE’s Office of Science testified before this Committee and highlighted the accomplishments of this program. However, its funding levels have been cut since 2012, as the Obama administration informally expressed its intention to end the program, and it was finally terminated last year. Thus far the Trump Administration also has not indicated any interest in restoring DOE’s stewardship of these activities.

With a proven track record of success, it is puzzling why such a program has been targeted for elimination. And it appears to make little sense to the Government Accountability Office as well. Earlier this year, GAO was asked to examine federal agencies’ radiation protection requirements and guidance and related research. As we’ll hear in testimony shortly, GAO responded to this request with a recent report which recommended that DOE lead the development of a plan for interagency collaboration on research into low dose radiation’s health effects, citing a lack of coordination efforts among federal agencies after the Department began phasing out its program.

To help address this issue, I would like to note that I have cosponsored the bipartisan “Department of Energy Research and Innovation Act” that would, among many other important policy provisions, direct DOE to carry out a low dose radiation research program. This bill represents a bipartisan, bicameral agreement that we achieved as part of the comprehensive energy bill negotiations carried out late last year. I am pleased that so many members on this Committee from both sides of the aisle have also cosponsored this bill, which passed the House without objection in January, and I urge my colleagues in the Senate to act upon it soon.

So I look forward to hearing more from our excellent panel of witnesses on the need for more low dose radiation research and on the role that federal agencies should be playing in this field. That said, I’d be remiss if I did not note that there is a critical participant that we are not hearing from today – and that’s the Department of Energy. Given that the primary reason that we’re holding this hearing is because DOE has chosen to end its low dose radiation research program, it seems to me that we should have a representative of the Department here to defend this decision and discuss whether this remains the wisest course of action going forward. Therefore I

am deeply disappointed that the Department declined to offer a witness for this hearing, and hope that the Chairman and I can work together to ensure that we have representatives of the Administration testify before us on these and the many other issues relevant to our federal agency oversight responsibilities going forward.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.