

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

House Committee on Science, Space & Technology
Subcommittee on Oversight
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
*“Leveraging Blockchain Technology to Improve Supply
Chain Management and Combat Counterfeit Goods”*
May 8, 2018

Thank you Chairman Abraham and Chairwoman Comstock.

In February, we held a joint subcommittee hearing on the “emerging applications for blockchain technology.” At that hearing, I stressed the need to “go beyond the hype and understand the real limitations of blockchain technology.” And today, I want to again stress the need to go beyond the blockchain hype. While I recognize the great potential of blockchain technology, blockchain has become a buzzword, and a splashy marketing tool. The name “Blockchain” has been slapped on solutions that do not technically meet the specifications of a blockchain. Blockchain technology is also being offered as the solution to problems when much simpler methods would be sufficient, or better. I hope that today’s hearing will discuss these issues.

But blockchain is not amongst the pressing issues that this Committee should be having TWO hearings on in less than THREE months. The Oversight subcommittee, and the Science Committee overall, has failed to look into serious allegations of wrongdoing by the current EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. This is unacceptable. Just a sampling of Mr. Pruitt’s actions:

Mr. Pruitt rented a room in an energy lobbyist wife’s Capitol Hill condominium for well-below market rate. Contrary to Mr. Pruitt’s initial public assertions, the lobbyist conducted business with EPA, even meeting, on behalf of a client, with Mr. Pruitt at EPA headquarters. Additionally, according to a recent *New York Times* article, this lobbyist later asked Mr. Pruitt to appoint three people to the EPA’s Science Advisory Board. This request was at the behest of one of the lobbyist’s clients.

Another example—the Government Accountability Office (GAO) determined that the EPA broke the law when it purchased a \$43,000 soundproof phone booth for Mr. Pruitt without the necessary Congressional notification and appropriation.

Additionally, Administrator Pruitt uses three different EPA email addresses in addition to his official email address. There have been indications that some of these e-mails are not checked for documents responsive to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

This is just a sampling of Mr. Pruitt’s alleged wrongdoing. There are now 11 federal investigations into alleged wrongdoing by Mr. Pruitt., but no action from this Committee. This is unacceptable.

Beyond the current investigations of Mr. Pruitt, there are further areas of necessary inquiry. Mr. Pruitt has repeatedly acted to undercut the role of science in informing EPA’s rulemaking. Mr.

Pruitt has taken steps to remove independent scientists from the Agency's science advisory panels and stocked the panels with industry representatives and scientists funded by industry interests. This undermines the scientific integrity of the EPA, as sound objective scientific data is supplanted by industry-focused information.

Mr. Pruitt has moved the review of potential EPA grant awards away from scientific experts, and into the hands of political appointees. Allegedly, the individual responsible for vetting these scientific grants has no scientific background or expertise. This undermines the integrity of EPA-funded studies, as it appears that politics, and not science, has taken precedence in EPA's grant decision-making process.

It is time this Committee began fulfilling its obligation to examine this Administration and hold bad actors accountable when they engage in unsound, unethical, or illegal activities.

Mr. Chairman, I stand ready to join with any legitimate efforts to hold members of the Executive Branch accountable for their actions, as this Committee has done with past Administrations when necessary. If even a fraction of the many allegations are true, Mr. Pruitt has repeatedly violated the public trust, and that should not be ignored.

I yield the balance of my time.