



COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**  
Lamar Smith, Chairman

For Immediate Release  
March 23, 2016

Media Contact: Zachary Kurz  
(202) 225-6371

**Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Jim Bridenstine (R-Okla.)**

*Examining EPA's Regional Haze Program: Regulations Without Visible Benefits*

**Chairman Bridenstine:** I recognize myself for five minutes for an opening statement. Today's hearing focuses on EPA's Regional Haze rule. As the Obama Administration nears the end of its time in office, we must carefully review the impact, costs, and achievability of any rules and implementation plans this activist EPA attempts to put in place on the way out the door. As we will see, the benefits of this regulation are dubious but the costs to individual states, including my home state of Oklahoma, will be very high.

Unlike the other regulations promulgated under the Clean Air Act that this committee has examined, the Regional Haze rule is unique for two important reasons. First, it is an aesthetic regulation, and NOT a public health regulation. These rules were designed primarily to ensure the public can clearly see the sights at National Parks and other natural landmarks. Second, Clean Air Act legislative history specifically gives individual States a unique degree of authority to be decision makers when implementing visibility-improving policies.

Over the past several decades, visibility levels at many of our national parks and wilderness areas have significantly improved, due in large part to the efforts of individual states working together with stakeholders to implement plans at the state level. The EPA did not object to the state plans then, recognizing our system of federalism. But under this President, the EPA has overruled the plans created by many states to comply this rule, instituting Federal Implementation Plans in 14 including Oklahoma, and attempting to institute FIPs in two more.

These federal plans will have huge implementation costs, hurting consumers, those on fixed incomes, and small businesses. It will force coal-fired power plants to shut down and make electricity generation more expensive. OG&E and AEP-PSO, utilities in my state, have had to shut down power plants, forcing them to propose rate hikes or else go out of business.

I will remind my colleagues about the multitude of economically detrimental, radical regulations pushed by this Administration, including the Clean Power Plan, Waters of the United States, and the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone.

And now, in a continuation of its war on the poor, the EPA is using "visibility improvement" to force utilities and other stakeholders to further move away from coal

and other forms of cost effective power generation. What's worse is that the improvements to visibility will be negligible – many of the EPA's own visibility goals have already been achieved! Further, the scientific justification for this regulation is shaky and questionable, as our witnesses will testify. The EPA is instituting more stringent controls for visibility than it would for health-based regulations.

The precedents set in this rule — requiring additional controls with no real benefit while requiring controls on individual generation sources — could have significant and draconian ramifications for regional haze planning across the country. This is yet another example of the Federal Government bullying my constituents.

Later this spring, the Committee will invite the EPA so that it can answer to why it has become a radical political arm of the Obama Administration, and why they are rushing through a vast number of hasty and non-scientific regulations, including the Regional Haze Implementation Plans. The EPA needs to be held accountable to the American people.

We welcome the witnesses today and look forward to their testimony.

###