



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

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Statement by Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Markup of H.R. 4675, the Low Dose Radiation Research Act of 2017

Chairman Smith: Today we will consider an important Energy Subcommittee bill, H.R. 4675, the Low Dose Radiation Research Act of 2017.

This bipartisan legislation was introduced by Representatives Roger Marshall, Dan Lipinski, Randy Weber and myself. It authorizes a revitalized low-dose radiation research program within the Biological and Environmental Research division of Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science.

This research program is part of the Science Committee's continued effort to ensure America remains a leader in basic research and innovation.

H.R. 4675 directs DOE to identify ongoing challenges in low-dose radiation science and develop a long-term basic research plan that addresses these challenges.

It also directs the department to engage with other federal agencies and the international research community to develop the basic research program.

This program will analyze any unknown health impacts of low levels of radiation, providing critical knowledge to our nation's researchers, industry, health care community and military as they handle nuclear material, maintain the nation's nuclear weapons program, provide medical treatment and dispose of nuclear waste.

Low dose radiation research can also inform regulatory agencies that set nuclear safety standards for the public, including enabling federal emergency response agencies to more accurately set areas of evacuation for a radiological incident like a nuclear power plant meltdown.

This research is also of particular importance to practicing physicians, who rely on thorough knowledge of radiation health risks to decide when and how to use life-saving diagnostics to detect and treat cancer in patients.

In the last Congress, this committee explored DOE's ill-advised decision to terminate its low dose radiation research program, which, until its closure in 2016, was one of the largest and most effective programs of its kind in the world. With so many questions

left unanswered about the science of low dose radiation, it is no surprise that closure of this crucial basic research program was opposed by the scientific community.

In a hearing last fall, the Science Committee heard from witnesses who strongly supported reprioritizing low dose radiation research at DOE. This legislation has received letters of support from the Health Physics Society, the American Association of Physicists in Medicine, the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements and leading researchers from Northwestern University and Columbia University.

Congress must re-prioritize basic research in low dose radiation so we know we are using the best available science to serve and maximize our nation's energy, medical and defense needs.

Again, I thank this bill's sponsors, Rep. Marshall, Ranking Member Lipinski and Chairman Weber, for their initiative on this issue and I urge my colleagues on the committee to support this bipartisan bill.

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