



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

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Statement of Vice Chairman Frank Lucas (R-Okla.)

H.R. 1431, the *Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board Reform Act of 2017*

Vice Chairman Lucas: I thank Chairman Smith for bringing this important legislation to a markup.

H.R. 1431, The Science Advisory Board Reform Act, ensures that the most qualified and capable scientists are free to undertake a balanced and open review of regulatory science.

The Science Advisory Board (or S-A-B) was created in 1978 to provide independent expert advice on scientific and technical information. This information is used to justify important policy decisions and should be held to a high standard.

In the subsequent decades and years, there have been serious deficiencies with the SAB and the process to select Board Members. Among other issues, there has been limited public participation, EPA interference with expert advice, and potential conflicts of interest. If the EPA undermines the Board's independence or prevents it from providing candid advice to Congress, then the SAB serves no value to the EPA.

The Board should be free to function as intended to ensure that sound science is driving policy decisions. We must reaffirm the Board's independence so that the public can be confident that policy decisions are not hi-jacked by a pre-determined political agenda.

It's time to update the law to restore scientific integrity to the process and independence to the Board.

In the previous Congress, a substantially similar bill passed the House with bipartisan support. This time around, we worked to revise this bill to ensure the best advisory process for the SAB.

"The Science Advisory Board Reform Act" of 2017 addresses SAB shortcomings and deficiencies by guaranteeing a well-balanced expert panel, increasing transparency, and encouraging public participation. This empowers the experts to provide meaningful and unbiased scientific advice.

This Act also addresses the need for Board membership from state, local and tribal governments. Currently on the Chartered SAB, there are only two members representing States. The fact that states like my home state of Oklahoma have no

Board members, even though we play a prominent role in the agriculture and energy industries, both of which are heavily regulated by the EPA, is troubling. Furthermore, this bill prevents current SAB members from holding EPA grants or contracts, as well as from receiving those funds within three years following the end of that member's service on the Board.

The bill also ensures that uncertainties in scientific conclusions are clearly communicated and allows the expert panel to focus on the science, rather than partisan policy debates. The language also codifies a requirement of the Board to respond to dissenting scientific views, and for comments to be published in the Federal Register. For ease of public access, these comments will be grouped by common theme and will not include reprinting of repetitious comments.

This legislation recognizes the important role science should play to inform policy debates. The safeguards provided in this bill will ensure public confidence, by requiring the use of sound science when informing regulatory decisions. This act restores the SAB as an important defender of scientific integrity.

These common sense reforms will make EPA's decisions more credible and balanced.

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