

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

House Committee on Science, Space, & Technology
“Making EPA Great Again”
February 7, 2017

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today. In particular, I want to thank my former House colleague, Dr. Rush Holt, for being here to share his unique perspective. I would also like to welcome to the Committee our new Colleagues from both sides of the aisle. As I stated at our organizational meeting this morning, it is my hope that we will be able to find common ground work together on important issues this Congress.

With that said, I am disappointed, but not really surprised, that our very first hearing this Congress will be focused on attacking the Environmental Protection Agency, as was so often the theme of our hearings last Congress. I would also note that, of the witnesses invited by the Majority to testify today, we have a lobbyist for industry, a representative from an industry trade group, and a consultant for industry. That is not a panel likely to produce an objective examination of EPA’s activities.

The efforts by some to undermine how the EPA, and other federal agencies, use science threatens our economy, threatens public health, threatens the environment, and threatens public confidence in our government. This is especially true when such efforts rely on biased, incomplete, and misleading information—“alternative facts” if you will—in an attempt to advance a provably false narrative against the EPA.

Regulatory activity to protect public health and the environment should be supported by a robust analysis of the best available scientific evidence, and that is what EPA does. Policies geared towards preemptively limiting scientific input into this process undermine EPA’s ability to take justifiable actions to protect the American public. Questioning the credibility of the scientific process, casting doubt on the scientific research used by EPA, or selectively limiting what sources of scientific information EPA may consider jeopardizes the effectiveness of the only government agency specifically tasked to protect human health and the environment.

Simply put, limiting the science EPA uses only serves to limit the actions EPA may take to protect public health and the environment.

I hope that my colleagues will listen today with a critical ear, and ask themselves whether they want to support policies that will harm future generations instead of empowering them, remove public health safeguards instead of strengthening them, and reverse the progress made over the last 40 years, instead of working to find a constructive path forward.

Thank you, I yield back.