



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

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Statement of Energy Subcommittee Chairman Randy Weber (R-Texas)

Examining Misconduct and Intimidation of Scientists by Senior DOE Officials

Chairman Weber: Good morning. As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy, I have spent this Congress focusing on basic research that can benefit our nation by enabling technology breakthroughs. Throughout its history, the Department of Energy (DOE) has conducted research in support of our nuclear energy and nuclear weapons complex, exploring the impact of radiation so our nation's researchers, industry, and military can safely handle nuclear material, maintain the nation's nuclear weapons program, and dispose of nuclear waste.

This use-inspired, basic research leads to scientific discoveries and long-term benefits for the energy industry and our national defense. Today, we will examine the Department's decision to terminate the Low Dose Radiation Research program, the only federal program currently conducting research in this area.

This program provides research that can inform authorities setting nuclear safety standards for the public. Low dose radiation research can also provide new data to enable federal emergency response agencies to more accurately set evacuation zones from radiological incidents, or provide research to enable practicing physicians to decide when and how to use diagnostics to detect cancer in patients. The research conducted in the Low Dose program can also facilitate medical research efforts to combat cancer.

When DOE chose to close down the Low Dose program, this committee began to examine this research program.

Committee staff contacted DOE specifically to hear from technical experts about the broad impact of this basic research program, and the potential value this research could yield for domestic energy, medical discovery, and national security.

And as this committee took steps to authorize the Low Dose program through the legislative process, we relied on these open conversations with DOE researchers to draft legislation that would prioritize this important research and responsibly invest American tax dollars.

These kinds of frank discussions between researchers and Congressional staff are absolutely vital in the legislative process. Members of Congress must be able to trust

that the information they receive from DOE is non-partisan and is delivered without political bias. Congress must get access to the facts.

The Department violated Congressional trust by attempting to censor information provided to committee staff.

And what's worse, a DOE scientist was punished for speaking to Congress. That is simply unacceptable.

Congress must be able to expect a high standard of accountability and honesty from federal agencies to effectively legislate. When scientists get fired for speaking honestly about their work, it is clear that politics are negatively impacting the work of Congress and stifling public dialogue.

I want to thank our witnesses for testifying today, particularly Dr. Metting for being willing to share her unfortunate experience with the committee. I hope that by exposing DOE's misconduct in this case, we can prevent this kind of inappropriate action in the future and preserve scientific integrity and transparency at the Department.

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