

Committee questions science and accountability at EPA

June 22, 2016

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held an oversight hearing this June to examine the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) scientific integrity and accountability.

In his opening statement, Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX) argued that EPA uses "suspect science, questionable legal interpretations, and flawed analysis" to underpin its regulations. Committee members echoed these concerns throughout the hearing.

Committee members scrutinized EPA's Clean Power Plan (CPP). Chairman Smith said CPP would reduce economic growth, increase electricity costs, and have a minimal impact on climate change. In response, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy testified that CPP reflected the natural direction of the energy market and rested on sound science.

Others questioned EPA's accountability to Congress. They accused the agency of only responding to one out of ten Committee requests in the past year. They also accused EPA staff of using personal email accounts to avoid congressional oversight. Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) countered that EPA had already provided the Committee with thousands of documents despite limited time and resources.

Still more questioned why EPA had suddenly removed a finalized report from its website. The report had focused on whether a particular herbicide caused cancer. Members of the Committee argued that the sudden removal showed that EPA had ignored the science to overrule the report; however, McCarthy clarified that a contractor had released the report early by mistake.

Despite the attacks, some Committee members praised EPA. Rep. Ami Bera (D-CA), applauded EPA's new ozone rule, which McCarthy cited as a critical public health measure, and Ranking Member Johnson complimented the agency for "balanced" and "progressive" regulations.

Other concerns voiced during the hearing included the Gold King Mine wastewater spill, racecar regulations, and Clean Water Rule's impact on farmers.

Sources: E&E Daily, Environmental Protection Agency
