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## House discusses earthquake science on 50th anniversary of the Great Alaska Earthquake

On March 27, the House Natural Resources Committee's Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee held an oversight hearing titled "Advances in Earthquake Science: 50th Anniversary of the Great Alaskan Quake."

The witnesses, representing the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Seismological Society of America (SSA), and academia, spoke of the importance of investing in early warning systems and reauthorizing the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP). They explained that although great advances have occurred in seismology since the Alaskan earthquake, including the maturation of the theory of plate tectonics and the implementation of earthquake-resilient building standards, scientists have a lot to learn about earthquakes and how to predict them. University of Washington Professor Dr. John Vidale pointed out that "we don't understand subduction zone earthquakes very well," as evidenced by the 2011 Tohoku earthquake in Japan that occurred in an area that scientists thought was not loaded for such an event.

When asked why other countries like Japan and Mexico have invested in early warning systems and the U.S. has not, USGS Senior Science Advisor for Earthquake and Geologic Hazards Dr. William Leith explained that those investments often occur in the wake of large, damaging earthquakes. He continued, saying "there seems to need to be a national political will in order to make the investment" in early warning systems and other technologies.

Representatives Rush Holt (D-NJ) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR) expressed their concern about human-induced seismic events, specifically earthquakes caused by the injection of wastewater produced from oil and gas extraction activities. When asked what information would help USGS better study these events, Dr. Leith responded that scientists need specific data on the exact times that injections occurred, as well as the volume and pressure of the injections. Currently, oil and gas companies need only provide monthly volume totals and average pressure reports at the end of each year.

Source: House Committee on Natural Resources

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