



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Hearing:
“The State of Climate Science and Why It Matters”
February 13, 2018

Let me first welcome everyone to the first full Committee Hearing of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology for the 116th Congress. I am looking forward to a productive and collegial meeting today, one in which rigorous scientific discourse can help enable the creation of sound public policy.

I also want to welcome all of our distinguished witnesses, and thank them for their flexibility in making themselves available to participate in this rescheduled hearing.

Today’s hearing is the first in what will be multiple climate change-related hearings this Congress. Following the release of the IPCC special report on global warming of 1.5°C, and the National Climate Assessment last year, it is clear that we are responsible for our planet warming at an alarming rate, and we already feeling the impacts of this warming today. Setting the stage with a discussion of the most relevant and up-to date scientific evidence from these and other reports, will allow us to better understand the climate-related impacts we are experiencing in all of our districts. The evidence of continued unmitigated emissions of greenhouse gases is clear. Our coastal communities are dealing with sea level rise and ocean acidification, and all communities are dealing with more severe weather incidents, and the increased exposure to extreme heat and poor air quality.

Today’s discussion on climate science is important to deepening our fundamental understanding of why the climate is changing, and how this manifests in ways that impact society. It will also help us as we turn our focus to the role of science and innovative technology development to devise adaptation and mitigation strategies, which will have numerous positive benefits for our economy, our safety and security, and our public health. I am glad we have the leading experts in these fields who worked closely on these reports to guide our discussion.

I also want to note that the impacts of climate change are not limited to what is described in these climate science reports. Just last week, NOAA’s State of the Climate Report for 2018 found that it was the wettest year for the contiguous U.S. in the past 35 years. NASA and NOAA also found that last year had the fourth highest global surface temperature since 1880. It has almost become a given that we can expect record-breaking temperatures every year, especially since the past five years have been the warmest in the modern record.

Though this Administration has regrettably chosen to ignore the findings of its own scientists in regards to climate change, we as lawmakers have a responsibility to protect the public's interest. I plan to do this by making sure this Committee is informed by the most relevant and up to date science as we work to conduct our legislative and oversight responsibilities. The Science Committee oversees much of the federal climate research, as well as the development and demonstration of new and innovative technologies, which makes our role as Members of this Committee critical to preparing our country to deal with climate change.

I look forward to kicking off a fruitful and informative discussion that will continue throughout this Congress on why we need to act on climate change now.