



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

Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

Joint Subcommittee Hearing:  
*EPA Advisory Committees: How Science Should Inform Decisions*  
Tuesday, July 16, 2019

Thank you to both our Chairs, and I would like to join you in welcoming our witnesses this afternoon. In fact, we have a panel full of familiar faces today – every member of our distinguished panel has offered their expertise to this Committee in the past, and I’m honored to welcome back some of the most esteemed voices in environmental and health science in the nation. Thank you to each of you for your tireless work both in academia and on various EPA advisory committees. And thank you to Mr. Gomez of the GAO for ensuring these important committees operate effectively.

Science advisory committees are crucial to ensuring the best science informs all aspects of decision making at the Environmental Protection Agency. They provide the expertise that allows us to be sure we are protecting the health of Americans and our environment to the best of our ability. It has been troubling to observe these important committees being dismantled and manipulated over the past two and a half years.

The most recent blow to advisory committees was the Executive Order issued by the President in June. This order directed agencies to cut one third of FACA committees not established by Congress or the President. It also caps the total number of FACA committees at 350 across the federal government. Such directives are clumsy at best and malicious at worst – there is no reason to presume that one third of committees have exhausted their usefulness. A cap on committees serves only to create a barrier for Agencies to solicit expert advice in a transparent manner. Last week, I sent a letter to science agencies inquiring about the metrics they will use to determine which committees to cut. I look forward to reviewing their responses. I hope the White House will reconsider this harmful order which serves only to decrease the transparency of the advice solicited by agencies across the government.

I would be remiss not to mention the circumstances under which Dr. Swackhamer joined us the last time she testified before the Committee. Just as today, Dr. Swackhamer testified in her capacity as an independent scientist back in 2017. However, days before the hearing, she was contacted by an EPA political official who had somehow obtained a copy of her prepared remarks and encouraged her to edit her testimony in a manner I consider to be misleading. I hope Dr. Swackhamer has not experienced similar interference in her preparation to join us here today.

Unfortunately, we have yet to receive a final report on this matter from the EPA Inspector General. I look forward to hearing from them.

Transparency and the application of credible science is a cornerstone of environmental and public health protections. I look forward to working with my colleagues, and today's distinguished witnesses, to ensuring the EPA continues to value these principles.

Thank you, and I yield back to Chairwoman Sherrill.