



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Hearing:

Federal Climate Adaptation and Resilience for the 21st Century

March 8, 2022

I want to begin by thanking all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for joining me here today to discuss this important topic.

The subject of this hearing is Federal climate adaptation and resilience. In other words, our focus will be the need for the Federal Government to protect itself from the impacts that climate change will bring in the years and decades to come.

Democrats and Republicans, on this Committee and throughout the Congress, hold different views on many aspects of climate policy, and those debates will continue. But within a topic that all too often divides us, this is one area where we share a common goal. So many vital Federal programs – important to all of us and backed by longstanding bipartisan support – are now vulnerable to climate change. We must support efforts to bolster Federal resilience in order to ensure that these programs continue to deliver needed results for our constituents and the country as a whole.

Climate impacts can take many forms: rising sea levels, higher temperatures, and more severe droughts and wildfires, to name only a few. For Federal agencies, the implications are clear. Coastal infrastructure is vulnerable to flooding. Facilities that require large amounts of energy confront stressed local power grids. In every region of the country, Federal assets are exposed to climate risks that threaten their programmatic missions.

Three agencies will testify today about these risks, as well as their adaptation and resilience strategies to address them. NASA, the Department of Energy, and NOAA perform critical functions for the American people. This Committee has a long history of supporting them and working to bolster their ability to achieve their missions.

The challenge posed by climate change is no different. When NASA launch facilities are threatened by sea level rise; when DOE National Laboratories experience environmental conditions that strain energy supplies and safety protocols; when NOAA platforms are forced to operate in more difficult environments than originally intended – well, those are challenges that

will need to be overcome. But to properly do so, we need to fully understand the threat, and we need to know what steps the agencies are already planning to assess that threat and mitigate it.

There is opportunity here as well. These three agencies are among the most powerful engines of the Federal scientific enterprise. They can play a critical role in generating climate data and disseminating that information to other agencies. They can and should lead the way in strengthening inter-agency coordination and educating other agencies about their climate risks in order to boost climate adaptation and resilience across the entire Federal Government.

I am grateful to our witnesses for appearing before us today. Your perspectives as representatives of NOAA, DOE, NASA, and GAO will help us to understand the scale of the problem for your respective agencies and for the government as a whole. Your testimony will help us to think about the best ways for Congress to support ongoing efforts to improve Federal climate adaptation and resilience, and in doing so, protect Federal programs and investments for the long term. I thank each of you for your commitment to public service.

I now yield to Ranking Member Lucas.