



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Haley Stevens (D-MI)
of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology

Joint Subcommittee Hearing:
Scientific Integrity in Federal Agencies
Wednesday, July 17, 2019

Good morning and thank you to the witnesses for being here this morning to discuss policies and procedures governing scientific integrity at Federal agencies.

Let me be clear among friends and witnesses. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue. It's not about one Administration or another. It is about ensuring public trust in the conduct, dissemination, and use of scientific research in the Federal government.

An overview of recent history is essential.

In 2010, then White House OSTP Director Dr. John Holdren issued a memorandum that laid out basic principles for the development and implementation of scientific integrity policies at all agencies. By the end of the Obama Administration, 24 Federal agencies had published scientific integrity policies consistent with the intent of the memo.

My friend Mr. Tonko took note of this positive executive action, and decided it was worthwhile to codify the principles in law. Notably, he started drafting a bill several months *prior* to the 2016 election, when there was every chance that there would be another Democratic administration in January 2017.

The *Scientific Integrity Act* is straightforward. It outlines prohibited conduct for employees of federal agencies that conduct scientific research. This includes suppressing scientific findings or coercing others to suppress scientific findings. It defines the rights and responsibilities of federal scientists in making public statements about their work to the media, the scientific community, and the public. It directs federal agencies to develop, adopt, and enforce scientific integrity policies that meet a number of specified criteria. And it directs agencies to appoint a dedicated career Scientific Integrity Officer. H.R. 1709 does not make instructions for any specific agency or call out any particular misdeed; it is an Administration-neutral and Agency-neutral set of principles.

So why do this? First, it's just good government. It ensures transparency and accountability in government, which is part of our Constitutional responsibility as the U.S. Congress; and ensures

we are relying on facts and increasing evidence around tested hypotheses regarding our most complex and nuanced policy changes.

Second, it protects Federal scientists, but does not dictate science as law. There have been many publicized and an unknown number of unpublicized cases in which the basic principles of scientific integrity have been violated, and both Federal employees and the taxpaying public suffer the consequences.

The people we represent here today in Congress rely on government agencies who are there to serve the public to be able to do their job to keep people safe and healthy by using the best available data, most accurate data to inform their policies – regardless of politics.

Today, in our government, federal agencies must run as effective organizations positioned for the most successful outcomes possible, whereas our taxpayers receive that precious but essential return on investment. Our biology, physics, and chemistry are governed by a set of natural laws. Our civil society is governed by a set of codified and recognized – self-evident – laws scribed by the legends of our democracy. Today we strive for neutral territory to legislate within this very chamber without the weight of dogma and ideology exclusively dictating our work. We strive to embrace a peer review of discovery and determination for new laws to exercise and lay out our future.

As Baruch Spinoza, one of the early philosophers of the Enlightenment, said: “Those who are governed by reason desire nothing for themselves which they do not also desire for the rest of humankind.”

We have an excellent panel today with diverse expertise and perspectives on this issue. I look forward to a spirited discussion and to hearing your thoughts on the *Scientific Integrity Act*.