

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
*“In Defense of Scientific Integrity:
Examining the IARC Monograph Programme and Glyphosate Review”*
February 6, 2018

Mr. Chairman, chemicals have the potential to greatly improve our quality of life, when developed and produced in a responsible manner. However, when produced or proliferated irresponsibly or without sufficient understanding of their potential impacts, chemicals can pose a grave and significant risk to every one of us. Unfortunately, by the time we realize the harm being caused by unsafe exposure to such toxic chemicals, the damage has often already been done, and we are left regretting the fact that there might have been preventative actions we could have taken to protect ourselves if we had a better understanding of the hazards.

If we knew then, what we know now, would we have filled our homes, schools, businesses, and hospitals with asbestos? Would we have supported the widespread installation of lead pipes to provide us with daily drinking water? Most Americans who have had to suffer, or who have seen their children and other loved ones suffer, through the adverse health effects of exposures to dangerous chemicals would likely say **no**, of course not.

The chemical we are discussing today, glyphosate, is already one of the most widely used chemicals in agriculture. For example, it is a key ingredient in Monsanto’s herbicide Roundup that has helped farmers get greater yields of corn and other agricultural products. However, the widespread prevalence of glyphosate has raised serious concerns about its toxicity and potential cancer causing properties.

That is why the work done by independent chemical assessment organizations, like the World Health Organization and its International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), is so critical to protecting the public health as those organizations evaluate, without prejudice or concern about profits, the health hazards and risks posed by exposure to toxic chemicals. By contrast, there has been extensive documentation of efforts by the chemical industry to bias the science and public perception of their chemicals to protect a financial interest rather than the public health.

If we are truly interested in defending scientific integrity, we should be doing more than simply hearing from industry-friendly scientists. As my colleagues may be aware, the EPA’s Office of Inspector General has been investigating allegations that Monsanto attempted to influence officials at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) who were central to EPA’s own review of glyphosate as well as potential collusion by those officials with Monsanto. If this Committee really wishes to do oversight in defense of scientific integrity, those allegations would certainly seem to be worthy of our attention. However, I’m not holding my breath that the Majority will undertake such an investigation.

Mr. Chairman, chemical companies will continue to innovate and manufacture chemicals that seek to improve human life, and I support their initiative in doing so. But such innovations should not come at the cost of human health. That is why the work of independent organizations like the IARC is so important, and why we in Congress should be supporting that work rather than attempting to undercut it.

The Minority Staff has produced a staff report that documents some of the tactics Monsanto has used to undermine the IARC monograph and scientific findings on glyphosate in general. I am attaching this report to my statement.

Thank you. I yield back.