

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

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Full Committee Markup of: *S. 141, the “Space Weather Research and Forecasting Act” and
H.R. 6468, the “Improving Science in Chemical Assessments Act”*
July 24, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Smith, and good afternoon to everyone.
Today we are marking up two bills: The “Space Weather Research and Forecasting Act” and the “Improving Science in Chemical Assessments Act.”

Before I speak on the specifics of the bills, I again want to take a moment to comment on the Committee’s dramatic turn away from regular order. This markup was noticed on Friday afternoon, well after most Members had left town. Moreover, since the markup is on a Tuesday, the amendment deadline was at 2pm Monday- which is before most Members are back in Washington. This hardly seems conducive to Member participation in the markup.

Then on Saturday afternoon, another bill was added to the markup. This may be the least amount of notice I have ever received of a bill being marked up in the Science Committee. In fact, until last Congress, this would have broken the longstanding Committee notice requirements. However, Chairman Smith changed the rules to allow weekend days to count toward the notice requirements.

On top of these issues, our Committee rarely holds legislative hearings, and we haven’t held a subcommittee markup in years. Bills are concocted in secret and thrown at Committee Members with no real chance for meaningful review. The result is that Members are disenfranchised and the work of this Committee suffers. We can do better than this.

The first bill up is the Space Weather Research and Forecasting Act. I will speak more about this in a minute when we consider it. However, I want to note how ridiculous it is to jam the Members of this Committee by noticing this bill over the weekend.

The bill we are marking up, S. 141, was introduced in January of 2017. It was referred to our Committee in May of 2017, which is well over a year ago. Mr. Perlmutter’s companion bill was introduced in June of 2017. We could have considered these bills at any point in the past year instead of jamming the Members of this Committee with a late markup notice.

This bill has been referred to four additional House committees, so I suspect it is going nowhere in a hurry. In fact, it seems like this entire markup is a complete waste of our Members time. The next bill we are marking up is a good example of the silliness that ensues when the Committee engages in these half-baked markups. We were supposed to mark this bill up last week. However, the Majority had to pull the bill when it wasn’t even referred to our Committee. So here we are to try again.

The bill appears to have been hastily drafted in secret, without getting any feedback from the affected agency or affected community. On top of being sloppily drafted and poorly vetted, this bill is just plain bad.

The bill would remove chemical assessments from the EPA's IRIS program and shift them to the separate program offices within the agency. Essentially, it shuts down IRIS without explicitly saying so. The end result, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that chemical assessments will be delayed and of worse quality than under the IRIS program.

Ultimately though, my greatest concern is the harm that will come to Americans if these chemical assessments are undermined. That is why the bill is opposed by the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Environmental Defense Fund. They have written letters to the committee expressing their opposition, and I ask that they be made a part of the record.

This is a bad bill that will ultimately result in bad science and sick people. I urge all of my colleagues to oppose it.

I yield back.