

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Ranking Member Donald Beyer (D-VA)**  
**of the Subcommittee on Oversight**

House Committee on Science, Space and Technology  
Subcommittee on Environment  
Subcommittee on Oversight  
*“Examining the Scientific and Operational Integrity of EPA’s IRIS Program”*  
September 6, 2017

Thank you Chairman Biggs and Chairman LaHood. Unfortunately, I too must convey my disappointment with this hearing and the apparent purpose for this hearing. This is not a hearing about oversight. This is not a hearing about how to improve the critical function of the EPA’s Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) program. This is not a hearing constructed to actually determine the facts about the problems this program has had in the past and the remarkable progress they have recently made. This appears to be a hearing for industry.

The letter that the EPA’s Science Advisory Board (SAB) wrote to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt just last week touted the progress made by the IRIS program and its importance in protecting the public’s health. The letter to Administrator Pruitt, written by the Chair of the SAB, said - quote: “The SAB members in attendance voted unanimously that I communicate to you their enthusiasm for the IRIS program’s progress.” However, the Majority has not invited anyone from the SAB or the National Academies of Sciences or the Government Accountability Office (GAO) or the EPA to testify about the significant improvements the program has made.

The Majority has instead chosen to ignore this progress and invited two industry scientists as witnesses, who undoubtedly will criticize the IRIS program and the EPA in general. And despite assurances from Majority staff that this hearing is simply about hearing from “stakeholders” about the IRIS program, the real intent seems to coincide with a calling by industry to eliminate IRIS altogether.

I would note that Chairman Biggs recently offered an Amendment to H.R. 3354 – the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2018 that would zero out all funding for the EPA’s IRIS program, effectively abolishing it. It appears that this hearing had a pre-determined outcome from the start, and was never intended to be a thoughtful examination of the EPA’s IRIS program. It appears to be some sort of pre-text for eliminating the program altogether.

I believe this hearing should be viewed in the larger context of what it actually is: another attack on the American public’s environmental health, and another opportunity for industry consultants and industry-paid scientists to attempt to weaken the effectiveness of the EPA, the only federal Agency charged with protecting the environment and the health of the American people. Some Trump Administration officials have also called for eliminating the IRIS program, a move supported by some from industry and industry-friendly groups such as the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI). The efforts by these individuals and groups to eliminate, or drastically

curtail the budget and staff of IRIS, seem to be part and parcel of this Administration's war against the environment and science, and appears to be part of this hearing's agenda too.

Whatever efforts this Administration takes to impede progress made to the EPA's IRIS program, reduce its role in identifying harmful chemicals, or eliminate this program altogether, those efforts fit neatly into the anti-science agenda already unveiled by this Administration.

Since the Trump Administration came to office less than eight months ago:

- Political appointees at EPA are now reviewing grants to conduct scientific studies, rather than actual scientists' as has been the tradition in the past.
- The EPA has withdrawn a data request to industry regarding methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, which has been a growing and dangerous problem.
- EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has made it known he wants more industry representatives on the Agency's scientific advisory boards, an effort that will undermine the health and safety of the American public and damage the environment.
- Key positions at the EPA are now being filled by individuals with deep ties to industry, rather than qualified scientists or public health experts.
- Senior federal officials and scientists have resigned in protest over the direction of the Trump Administration and the actions of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt.
- The EPA and other federal agencies have scrubbed references to climate change from their websites and some federal offices have reportedly banned the use of the term.

It disheartens me that the Science Committee is not investigating important scientific issues that have a real world impact on the health and safety of citizens across this country, their exposure to chemical pollutants, for instance, and the human health implications of a warming climate. Rather, the Committee seems resolved to providing a forum for industry scientists to advocate for policies and procedures that will please the industries they work for, but cause harm to the environment and the public health of all Americans across the political spectrum.

Thank you, I yield back.