

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

June 20 Hearing on the Office of Science and Technology Policy

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson

Thank you, Chairman Hall, for holding this hearing and welcome, Dr. Holdren to the Committee for the second time this year. As you know, every year we invite the OSTP Director to appear before the Committee to help us understand not just that year's R&D budget request but also your office's role in the federal R&D enterprise.

We live in an increasingly complex world, and the challenges we face will be both impacted by and—hopefully—alleviated by science and technology. As Americans, we should celebrate the fact that a highly respected scientist such as Dr. Holdren has the ear of the President and is truly part of his inner circle of advisors on matters of science and technology. We in Congress also can benefit from good advice on matters of science and technology policy, and so I am looking forward to your testimony today.

The truth is that OSTP has been asked to do a lot by both Congress and the President. In addition to your more visible initiatives, I know that you have to carry out necessary interagency coordination—a job that probably goes underappreciated and undervalued by all of us. The work of OSTP staff helps to minimize unnecessary duplication in R&D programs across the government and ensure that significant research gaps are addressed.

Dr. Holdren, you have been asked to testify about the structure, function, and funding of your office, as well as the two hats you wear as both Science Advisor to the President and Director of OSTP. You face many challenges, some of which you inherited, such as the NOAA satellite program, and others that are more recent, such as the arm-twisting you probably had to do to get agencies to complete their scientific integrity policies. I think we forget sometimes that your actual authority is limited and that much of what you accomplish you do through leadership, persuasion, and persistence.

As you know, I care deeply about the need to ensure that we remain competitive in a challenging world economy as well as improve the quality of life for all our citizens. Research and innovation are essential ingredients of any effort to meet those two goals, as is STEM education. You have a number of initiatives underway related to STEM education, and I would like to hear how those are faring and any issues that you are facing.

With respect to research and innovation, I would like to hear about your efforts to promote innovation and to move new technologies towards commercialization. I know that the Administration has a number of initiatives underway in that regard, such as the Startup America Initiative, and I would like to get your assessment of how well those initiatives are working and what additional steps may be needed.

Finally, in addition to hearing about your key priorities and goals for your office, I'd like to hear what you might need from Congress, whether it's related to a general function of your office or to a specific goal or task. You have an important responsibility, and we want you to succeed.

Dr. Holdren, I look forward to your testimony and I yield back the remainder of my time.

