

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Joint Environment and Energy Subcommittee Hearing
Lessons Learned: EPA's Investigations of Hydraulic Fracturing
July 24, 2013; 10:00 AM

Statement

I am very pleased that the Energy and Environment Subcommittees are holding this hearing today, and I welcome all of our distinguished panelists to the Committee. Like so many others, I am concerned about the health and welfare of hardworking families who live around fracking facilities. Concerns about contamination of groundwater and drinking water have troubled us since the shale gas boom started over a decade ago. And of course, that shale gas boom would likely not exist without critical research investments made by the Department of Energy over 30 years ago to bring new natural gas online.

But, as the number of fracking facilities operating in oil and gas rich states has gone from hundreds to thousands, the number of reports from citizens complaining of contamination of their drinking water has increased. We must be careful not to sacrifice the quality of our natural water resources for the sake of cheaper gas. We need clean water as much as we need affordable energy options. Our water resources are already stretched to support our industrial and agricultural sectors, and residential and commercial development. We cannot afford to contaminate the limited drinking water supplies that we have.

Like so many of our hearings involving the oil and gas industry, I expect that some of my colleagues across the aisle will not like anything that the EPA has to say about its progress in researching these issues. But, it is in the best interest of everyone, especially the fracking industry, to resolve questions surrounding the fracking water cycle and the impact to groundwater and drinking water.

In closing, I would like to once again dispel the myth—because I expect that it will undoubtedly be raised--- that the Democrats are mounting a war on oil and gas. We simply recognize that our nation is strengthened by both diversifying our energy supply AND protecting public health. These go hand in hand. Americans have a right to clean water AND a healthier environment. The gas will be there, and it is up to the industry to make sure it can be produced in an environmentally sound manner.

Thank you, and I yield back.