

Opening Statement Ranking Member Brad Miller

February 3, 2011

Hearing on EPA Research and Laboratories
“Fostering Quality Science at EPA: Perspectives on Common Sense Reform”
Continuation of November Hearing

U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

Thank you Chairman Harris. Today the Subcommittee meets again for part two of the hearing we held at the end of November on science at the EPA. The first two hearings in this series were a disappointment, and a missed opportunity to build a helpful record in preparation for the reauthorization of the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act, or ERDDA.

However, today, I am pleased to see that we have some panelists with the experience and knowledge required to address in detail critical improvements that can make EPA’s research enterprise more effective, efficient, and transparent. At the least, this is not just a panel of witnesses armed only talking points and flailing criticism meant to undermine or dismantle the one agency charged with protecting our citizens and the environment from unlawful pollution. Let’s use their time and ours wisely.

As I have stated before, I approach this task hoping to work with my Republican counterparts in pursuing reforms that will lead to better research practices that help EPA accomplish its mission. While we will not always agree on the best way to do that, I am not interested in restructuring EPA to take the only environmental cop off the beat.

There are legitimate concerns related to EPA’s research infrastructure and processes, but they are complex, and we have to approach this process in a well-thought out and planned manner. I have authored and co-authored many bills in my time here. I understand the amount of research, stakeholder conversations, and thought that must take place to write legislation as important and ambitious as the reauthorization of ERDDA.

EPA's scientific research is increasingly important as we seek to understand and address more complex environmental issues that continue to emerge and evolve. This was demonstrated just 48 hours ago when this Subcommittee met to consider EPA's role in examining ground-water research and the start of the Pavilion Study process.

Scientific research, knowledge, and technical information are fundamental to EPA's mission, and inform its standard-setting, regulatory, compliance, and enforcement functions. That is why Congress created advisory bodies such as the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) and the Science Advisory Board (SAB) that were created to provide independent advice on the science which allows the Administrator to make regulatory decisions. In addition to advice from an array of experts from many fields, the scientific process also involves the use of epidemiology and modeling to aid in hazard identification, which is only the first stage of quantitative risk assessment.

But in the scientific process that epidemiology and modeling investigations are not the only approach to research studies. It is a multidisciplinary approach including real-time monitoring, clinical and laboratory studies, model development, measurement and exposure methods, characterization of sources, and control technologies. Just like the process we need in reauthorizing ERDDA, the responsibility of the scientific process and regulatory decision-making takes a host of perspectives, methods, and techniques.

In short, science should inform and support the decisions we make. And most important, we all have an ultimate responsibility to do everything we can to ensure that EVERYONE continues to enjoy a decent quality life.

With that, Chairman Harris, I yield back.