

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Full Committee Hearing
“EPA’s Carbon Plan: Failure by Design”

July 30, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning. Last month, the Environmental Protection Agency released its Clean Power Plan, a proposal to cut carbon pollution from the largest source – power plants.

This proposal like the rest of President Obama’s Climate Action Plan, is the bold step forward our nation needs to address the impacts of climate change. Impacts that are growing more present in the lives of every American. Severe drought, record temperatures, and an increase in the spread of infectious disease are just a few examples of what Americans will have to confront in the coming years.

The scientific evidence confirms that we need to act now to lessen these impacts. Cutting carbon emissions from the power sector is critical to any solution and that is why I support the Clean Power Plan. It sets reasonable limits that take into account the characteristics of each state. It is based on strategies already in use such as improving energy efficiency and power plant operations, and encouraging the development of renewables. And finally, it provides the states with flexibility; EPA is not prescribing a specific set of measures. States will choose what goes into their plans and they can work alone or as part of a multi-state effort to achieve meaningful reductions.

Today we will hear from some Members and witnesses that EPA is acting beyond its authority, and that EPA regulations are killing the economy and jobs.

This is not a new argument, but one that we have heard time and time again. Whenever, EPA proposes an action that will protect the air we breathe or the water we drink, industry raises alarms about the purported negative impact on the economy. I expect we will hear the same argument trotted out again at today’s hearing.

In addition, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are fond of saying that those who want to address climate change are alarmists, using “scare tactics” to frighten the American people. I would say that the true alarmists are those who have a history of exaggerating the cost of compliance. For example, in 1990, electric utilities opposed to the acid rain program said the

cost of an allowance to emit sulfur dioxide would be \$1,500 per ton. It, in fact, turned out to be \$150 per ton.

Mr. Chairman, I could go on, but the track record of the Clean Air Act speaks for itself. Since its adoption in 1970, air pollution has declined by more than 70 percent and the American economy has more than tripled. Now, more than ever, the American people need a strong EPA. I firmly believe we can have a vibrant economy and a safe and healthy environment. The Clean Power Plan puts us on the path to achieving both.

Thank you and I yield back.