

OPENING STATEMENT

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

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing

*“An Overview of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Budget Request for
Fiscal Year 2015”*

April 30, 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would first like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Sullivan. She has appeared before our Committee several times, and I am pleased that the Senate has confirmed her as Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. I look forward to a productive discussion of the Administration’s FY15 budget request for NOAA at today’s hearing.

As we all know, NOAA’s scientific research conducted in support of weather forecasting, fishery management, and coastal resiliency plays a critical role in enhancing our understanding of the environment and ensuring a strong economy. Underpinning many of these efforts are programs that focus on addressing the challenges of climate change, such as rising sea levels, changes in ocean chemistry and ecosystems, and more severe weather. Cutting edge research conducted by the agency is necessary to ensure our communities are prepared for the very real challenges brought on by a changing climate.

In fact, many of my colleagues on this Committee come from States which are now facing the impacts of our changing climate. Droughts in Texas and California have put an increased, and in some instances unparalleled, strain on local and regional economies, and on the overall public health and welfare of our citizens. Our coastal communities face pressing challenges presented by rising sea-levels, to say nothing of the enormous threat posed by more severe hurricanes. Sadly, even this week, dozens of people have lost their lives as a result of tornados in the Midwest and South, and more than 75 million people were dealing with the threat of severe weather in States like Alabama, Mississippi, and Oklahoma.

One of the agencies the American people turn to is NOAA for critical information before, during, and after these severe events. Whether it is providing forecasts and warnings of pending storms, working with state or local decision makers to develop effective response strategies, or conducting research that improves our understanding of severe weather to enhance the resiliency of our communities, it is essential that we maintain our commitment to the science done at NOAA.

Mr. Chairman, the list of industries, local agencies, States, and Nations that take climate change seriously is growing rapidly and without end. It is long past time that we – in Congress – take it seriously too. I am happy to see that the President’s budget request for NOAA emphasizes the agency’s critical role in helping the United States act on climate change. I look forward to discussing these efforts, as well as the other important initiatives and programs that are contained in NOAA’s proposed budget. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.