

OPENING STATEMENT  
**Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (D-TX)**  
**of the Subcommittee on Environment**

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Environment  
*“Expanding the Role of States in EPA Rulemaking”*  
May 23, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Before we talk about the topic that is the title of this hearing today, expanding the role of states in EPA rulemaking, we need to discuss the basis of these rules themselves. The existence of the EPA, and its core mission to protect human health and the environment, stemmed from a failure of the states to safeguard their residents from pollution in the air, water, and soil. EPA’s role as a federal environmental regulatory body was meant to provide an even playing field for all Americans, regardless of geography, because the health of our families is not something we can leave to chance.

The mission of the EPA is to protect human health and the environment, and the agency’s purpose clearly states that its efforts to protect Americans from significant risks should be based on the best available scientific information. As members of the Science Committee, it is important for us to focus on oversight of the federal research undertaken by agencies in our jurisdiction. For the EPA, this means allowing the Office of Research and Development to continue its leading-edge scientific research that forms the basis of Agency actions, including rulemaking.

The “Back to Basics” agenda that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has touted recently, with a focus on “environment, economy, and engagement,” appears to have little overlap with the agency’s stated mission *to protect human health and the environment*.

Further actions by both the EPA Administrator and the Trump Administration have shown an increased proclivity toward promoting industry interests over public health, whether by refusing to renew the terms of eligible members of the Agency’s Board of Scientific Counselors, or

proposing to gut the funding for the EPA's Office of Research and Development, the office that conducts the research that forms the basis of environmental protections.

This Administration and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in this Committee are quick to forget the condition of our environment prior to the existence of the EPA. Pollution was pervasive in our air, water, and soil. Let me be clear: our work is not done. Just because we cannot see the pollution around us now that our rivers no longer catch fire and our cities are not as choked by smog, does not mean the EPA can close up shop or retreat. In fact we need the EPA now more than ever.

The American people agree. During a recent call for comments on what EPA regulations to modify, repeal, or replace, thousands of Americans pleaded to keep in place environmental safeguards, with some even warning that we would be doomed to repeat our history if we dismantled existing protections.

Although I am concerned by the Administration's broad actions against science across the agencies, I am especially troubled by the specific EPA actions because of the seriousness of the agency's mission to protect the public from environmental risks. That's why I am pleased that we have Dr. Swackhamer here today to highlight the scientific foundation of these environmental safeguards, and the importance of continuing to press forward on scientific research both internally at the EPA, and additionally through grants.

I look forward to a discussion starting today and I hope continuing into the future about the integral role that scientific inquiry plays in informing policy and risk at the EPA in order to keep our constituents safe and healthy in the communities we're all so honored to represent. With that I would like to again thank the witnesses for being here today, and I yield back the balance of my time.