

Ranking Member Eric Swalwell (D-CA)
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Joint Hearing of Environment and Energy Subcommittees:
Lessons Learned: EPA's Investigations of Hydraulic Fracturing
2318 Rayburn House Office Building
July 24, 2013; 10:00 AM

Opening Statement

Thank you Chairman Stewart and Chairman Lummis for holding this hearing today, and I also want to thank the witnesses for being here. I appreciate the opportunity to further examine the EPA's efforts to determine whether there is a significant link between fracking and groundwater quality and, if so, the next steps we need to take to ensure that our drinking water is clean and safe.

As I've said before, I agree with those who say we need an "all of the above" approach to energy production. The emerging natural gas boom obviously provides an exciting opportunity for our nation - not to mention California - to create jobs and diversify energy options for both consumers and industry over the next several years.

That said, when it comes to fracking, we need to proceed with extreme caution. We have to be careful that we extract this resource safely, without unintended, serious consequences to either our health or the environment. While I know it is not the focus of this particular hearing, it is still worth noting to these expert witnesses that a particular concern to Californians is the possibility that hydraulic fracturing might cause earthquakes. It would be very short-sighted to produce energy via fracking only to find out later that it caused such damage.

So I am pleased that the EPA and other relevant federal agencies, along with many of your partners in the states, are taking these issues seriously. I urge you to take the time you need to get the most accurate answers possible, even if some of them don't turn out to be what we want to hear. There is simply no place for politics when it comes to making sure that the water that our families rely on is safe, and the homes that we live in are not at risk of a man-made disaster.

I look forward to learning more on this important issue, and with that, I yield back the balance of my time.