

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Environment
“Examining EPA’s Regional Haze Program: Regulations Without Visible Benefits”
March 23, 2016

Thank you Mr. Chairman and welcome to our witnesses. We are here this morning to discuss the Environmental Protection Agency’s regional haze program. Nearly 40 years ago, Congress called on EPA to implement a program that would address air pollution in the most iconic and unique places in our country – our National Parks. Members of Congress wanted to ensure that future generations would be able to enjoy these scenic vistas and that their view would not be marred by a discolored haze.

While the nation’s air quality has improved over the years – in part because of programs like the one we are discussing today – there is still more that needs to be done. When someone visits a National Park today they miss out on nearly 50 miles of scenery because of regional haze. This pollution doesn’t just spoil the view; it also has a negative impact on public health.

Unfortunately, officials from my home State of Texas, are not leading the charge to reduce air pollution, but instead are fighting the EPA once again. Last month, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed a lawsuit against EPA after the agency rejected the state’s plan for reducing regional haze and replaced it with a federal plan.

As I understand it, the Texas plan did not include a single additional pollution control on any of the state’s facilities. I’m not sure how the state expected EPA to agree that such a do-nothing plan could qualify as making reasonable progress toward the program’s goal of eliminating haze pollution and restoring natural visibility conditions.

Some will likely argue that the pollution controls EPA is requiring will not have significant impact on visibility at Big Bend or the Guadalupe Mountains. They will also argue that the controls are too expensive and that the reliability of state’s electric grid will be threatened. This is not the case. EPA’s plan represents a cost-effective solution to addressing regional haze.

The EPA’s plan will not only ensure that visitors to Big Bend and the Guadalupe Mountains can enjoy the scenery for years to come, but it will help lessen the public health burden poor air quality has imposed on Texans for far too long.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and I yield back the balance of my time.