



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement by Rep. Roger Marshall (R-Kan.)

Markup of H.R. 4675, the Low Dose Radiation Research Act of 2017

Rep. Marshall: Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Smith, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of this important legislation. I would like to thank the chairman, as well as Representatives Dan Lipinski and Randy Weber, for cosponsoring H.R. 4675, the Low Dose Radiation Research Act of 2017. I am grateful for their leadership and their commitment to biological and environmental science research. And truly blessed to work alongside the members of this committee that have supported initiatives in basic science research to keep America safe and globally competitive. The Low Dose Radiation Research Act of 2017 requires the Department of Energy to carry out a research program on low dose radiation within the Office of Science.

This bill directs the Department of Energy to work with key federal agencies and research communities to develop a long-term strategic research plan. This program will increase our understanding of the health effects that low doses of ionizing radiation have on biological systems. Every day, humans are exposed to low doses of radiation. It is the product of industrial activities, commercial processes, medical procedures and naturally occurring systems. Research has consistently shown us the adverse health effects associated with high doses of radiation. But the health risks associated with exposure to low doses of radiation are much more difficult to observe, and we are a long way away from understanding and accurately assessing this risk.

In the absence of conclusive evidence, agencies like the Department of Energy, the Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency are obligated to assume that any exposure to radiation increases the risk of harmful health effects. Without proper research, agencies have no way to measure if there is a safe radiation threshold. Our restricted understanding of low-dose radiation health risks directly impairs our ability to address potential radiological events and medically-based radiation exposures. It may also result in overly stringent regulatory standards, inhibiting the development of nuclear energy opportunities and posing an undue economic burden on the American people.

As a physician in my home state of Kansas, I have a first-hand understanding of the crucial importance of verified research in ensuring the best medical outcomes for my patients. For instance, an adult patient who receives a computed tomography (or CT) scan of the torso, is exposed to approximately three years' worth of background

radiation at once. The CT scan is an invaluable diagnostic tool, replacing many invasive surgical procedures, and is a medical necessity for countless Americans. Today, we physicians are unable to inform our patients of the specific health risks associated with these types of vital imaging processes.

There is broad consensus among the radiobiology community that more research is necessary for federal agencies, physicians and related experts to make better-informed decisions regarding these risks. It is no surprise that H.R. 4675 has received support from the Health Physics Society, the American Association of Physicists in Medicine, the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements and leading researchers from Northwestern University and Columbia University.

Once again, I would like to thank Representative Dan Lipinski, Chairman Lamar Smith and Energy Subcommittee Chairman Randy Weber for cosponsoring this important legislation.

I encourage my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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