

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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**Statement of Energy Subcommittee Chairman Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.)
Hearing on “A Review of Federal Hydraulic Fracturing Research Activities”**

Chairman Lummis: Good morning and welcome to this morning’s hearing, A Review of Federal Hydraulic Fracturing Research Activities.

This is the fourth meeting of the Energy Subcommittee this Congress, and today we welcome our friends from the Environment Subcommittee to discuss this cross-cutting issue. A primary recurring theme from our earlier hearings—which focused on energy markets and related technology subsidies—was the incredible transformation of the U.S. energy sector as a result of hydraulic fracturing-enabled shale production.

Today we will build on this theme by (figuratively) drilling down into the science of hydraulic fracturing.

In April of 2012, President Obama signed an Executive Order creating a senior level task force charged with coordinating federal actions related to development of unconventional natural gas. Concurrent with the President’s announcement, EPA, DOE, and the Department of Interior signed a memorandum of understanding committing to develop an interagency plan to guide implementation of the Administration’s \$45 million budget request to study environmental impacts associated with unconventional oil and gas production.

The agencies committed to release a draft of the research plan by October 2012 and complete the final plan by January 2013. Today, a year after the President’s original announcement, the Administration has not even released a draft version of its plan for public comment.

Consequently, Congress and the public have very few details regarding the Administration’s ongoing activities in this area. In addition to last year’s \$45 million request, the President is seeking an additional \$38 million in fiscal year 2014. Our concerns regarding these activities are simple and straightforward: before Congress redirects tens of millions of dollars for this research effort, the Administration must tell us what it wants to spend this money on.

Bringing sunlight to these activities is especially important given the Administration’s embarrassing track record of unsubstantiated allegations when it comes to hydraulic fracturing. Pavillion, a small town in my state of Wyoming, is at the center of this storm. In late 2011, EPA put Pavillion in the national spotlight with a “draft” report implying that fracking was somehow responsible for the quality of water in the areas near town.

However, in the days and weeks that followed this announcement, the State of Wyoming, industry, and other federal agencies exposed EPA’s study as deeply flawed. Former Administrator Jackson even

admitted to me during questioning at another committee that the EPA was not confident it had discovered groundwater contamination in Pavillion related to fracking.

Given its serious flaws, I have called on the Agency to abandon the report and return to a collaborative effort with the State of Wyoming on how to resolve the issues around Pavillion. The people of Pavillion deserve resolution, and the State of Wyoming deserves deference for the hard work it has done to ensure that oil and gas development in our state is done safely. I certainly plan to follow-up with EPA to ensure they get it.

Policymaking related to fracking should be driven by open public debate based on peer-reviewed science, not political agendas. That is why we are here today—to ensure the Administration’s fracking-related research activities are appropriate, balanced, and transparent.

On a related note, I want to express my great frustration with the lack of cooperation from EPA in planning this hearing. More than four weeks ago, we invited Bob Sussman to testify at this hearing on behalf of the agency. Despite this extended advance notice, and Mr. Sussman’s role as EPA’s senior policy representative on the interagency group we are here to discuss, the Agency refused to allow him to participate or even provide an explanation for its refusal. While we appreciate Dr. Teichman’s presence here today, EPA’s lack of cooperation is unacceptable, and only raises further questions regarding the agency’s transparency and ultimate intentions regarding fracking.

I thank our witnesses for being here, and look forward to today’s discussion.

I now recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Swalwell, for five minutes.

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