

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



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**Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Andy Harris (R-Md)  
Hearing on The State of the Environment: Evaluating Progress and Priorities**

**Chairman Harris:** “Good morning. Welcome to the first hearing of the Environment Subcommittee in 2013: The State of the Environment: Evaluating Progress and Priorities. I want to recognize and welcome our new Ranking Member, Representative Suzanne Bonamici from Oregon, as well as our new Vice-Chairman Chris Stewart from Utah. Of course, we all welcome the gentleman from Texas, Chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee Lamar Smith. I look forward to working all the members of the subcommittee on a myriad of environmental issues in the 113th Congress.

“Today we are going to talk about the greatest story never told. In the last four decades, Americans have witnessed dramatic improvements in the environmental health of this country. This is characterized by the improvement in air and water quality, less exposure to toxic chemicals, and growing forest areas, to name a few. All the while, U.S. has experienced significant growth in GDP and per capita income. This progress is due to a number of factors, including technological innovations, State and local efforts, and to some degree, the rational implementation of Federal regulations. Just two days ago would have been the 82nd birthday of Julian Simon, renowned economist from the University of Maryland. His most important insights were that the world is getting better all the time and that energy serves as the “master resource” for those improvements. I could not agree more. My children are growing up in a much healthier world than the one where I grew up.

“However, despite the substantial progress made in environmental health and quality of life, Americans are constantly bombarded by the media and this Administration with doomsday predictions. For instance, we have been told that extreme storms and increased childhood asthma are indicators that the environment is worse off than ever. These allegations fly in the face of the hard facts that severe weather has always been a threat and that our air quality has improved dramatically.. This invented crisis mentality prove what another fellow Marylander and columnist for the Baltimore Sun, H.L. Mencken wrote, “The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.”

“So what is the solution to this disconnect between reality and what we are being told? How do we work together on continuing to enhance environmental health without needlessly scaring our constituents or stifling our economy? First, I believe we must recognize and educate people about the incredible progress made so far. Since 1980, aggregate emissions of the six criteria air pollutants regulated under the Clean Air Act have dropped 63 percent. Over a similar period, there has been a 65 percent reduction in toxic releases of chemicals tracked by EPA. Other indicators demonstrate a similar trend of reduced environmental risk.

“Second, we must also acknowledge that most of the gains made in environmental health thus far were changes that were affordable, or if they had high costs, the associated benefits were clear, significant, and cost effective. Future progress will not likely be so easily identified, will be extremely costly, and benefits may be unquantifiable. For example, the latest round of increasingly burdensome regulations may result in the closing of power plants, reducing manufacturing production and sending jobs overseas. We are already seeing employers react to proposed EPA regulations in this manner. What is not included in the government’s analysis is the added cost of regulations to consumers, resulting in higher energy and food bills, or the inevitable hardships that occur when companies are forced to reduce the workforce.

“Once these two tenets are accepted—that the environment is getting better and that even well intended actions may harm the economy—we can begin to prioritize a research and development and regulatory agenda that actually protects human health and the environment without crippling the economy. In light of the President’s pledge in the State of the Union that he will “direct my Cabinet to come up with executive actions we can take, now and in the future, to reduce pollution,” it is critical that any such actions be based on good, transparent science and not on imaginary hobgoblins.

“I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how to balance quality science and need for regulation with true economic costs and benefits.”

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