TESTIMONY OF
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COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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Good morning Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Johnson, and other distinguished members of the Committee. I am pleased to be here to talk about the central role science plays at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Let me begin by stating that science is and has always been the backbone of the EPA's decision-making. The Agency's ability to pursue its mission to protect human health and the environment depends upon the integrity of the science upon which it relies. I firmly believe that environmental policies, decisions, guidance, and regulations that impact the lives of all Americans must be grounded, at a most fundamental level, in sound, high quality, transparent, science.

Because we rely so heavily on science to meet our mission on behalf of the American people, it must be conducted in ways that are transparent, free from bias and conflicts of interest, and of the highest quality, integrity, and credibility. These qualities are important not just within our own organization and the federal government, but across the scientific community, with its long established and highly honorable commitment to maintaining strict adherence to ethical investigation and research. That's why the agency has established—and embraced—a Scientific

Integrity Policy[1] that builds upon existing Agency and government-wide policies and guidance documents, explicitly outlining the EPA's commitment to the highest standards of scientific integrity. And that commitment extends to any scientist or organization who wishes to contribute to our efforts. All EPA-funded research projects, whether conducted by EPA scientists or outside grantees and collaborators, must comply with the agency's rigorous quality assurance requirements.

To ensure that we have the best possible science, we are committed to rigorous, independent peer review of the scientific data, models and analyses that support our decisions. Peer review can take a number of forms, ranging from external reviews by the National Academy of Sciences or the EPA's federal advisory committees to contractor-coordinated reviews. Consistent with OMB guidance, we require peer review for all EPA research products and for all influential scientific information and highly influential scientific assessments.

Among the external advisory committees is the EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB). SAB reviews are conducted by groups of independent non-EPA scientists with the range of expertise required for the particular advisory topic. We invite the public to nominate experts for SAB panels and to comment on candidates being considered by the EPA for SAB panels. The EPA evaluates public comments and information submitted about SAB nominees. The EPA reviews experts' confidential financial information to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest.

SAB peer reviews are conducted in public sessions in compliance with the open-government requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The public is invited to attend and to provide oral and written comments for consideration by the SAB. Public comments help to

[1] http://www.epa.gov/research/htm/scientific-integrity.htm

ensure that all relevant scientific and technical issues are available to the SAB as it reviews the science that will support our environmental decisions.

Another example is the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) which provides independent advice to the EPA Administrator on the science that supports the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The CASAC reviews the EPA's Integrated Science Assessments which deliver science in support of the Clean Air Act.

Thanks to the science behind the implementation of the Clean Air Act, we have made significant and far-reaching improvements in the health and well-being of the American public. In 2010 alone, EPA estimates that programs implemented pursuant to the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 avoided 160,000 premature deaths millions of cases of respiratory problems such as acute bronchitis and asthma attacks; 45,000 cardiovascular hospitalizations; and 41,000 hospital admissions. [2] These improvements have all occurred during a period of economic growth; between1970 and 2012 the Gross Domestic Product increased by 219%.[3]

Through a transparent and open process, we have also committed to enhancing the Agency's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) assessment program. A strong, scientifically rigorous IRIS Program is of critical importance, and the EPA is in the process of: 1) enhancing the scientific integrity of assessments; 2) enhancing the productivity of the Program; and 3) increasing transparency so that issues are identified and debated early in the process. In 2009, the EPA made significant enhancements to IRIS by announcing a new 7-step assessment

[2] The Benefits and Costs of the Clean Air Act from 1990 to 2020. Final Report. Prepared by the USEPA Office of Air and Radiation. February 2011. Table 5-6. http://www.epa.gov/air/sect812/prospective2.html

[3] Bureau of Economic Analysis, National Economic Accounts, "Table 1.1.5. Gross Domestic Product," http://bea.gov/national/pdf/dpga.pdf.

development process. Since that time, the National Research Council (NRC) has made recommendations related to enhancing the development of IRIS assessments. The EPA is making changes to the IRIS Program to implement the NRC recommendations. These changes will help the EPA produce more high quality IRIS assessments each year in a timely and transparent manner to meet the needs of the Agency and the public. A newly released NRC report[4] is largely supportive of the enhanced approach the EPA is taking to develop the IRIS assessment for inorganic arsenic.

As I mentioned in my opening statement, science is the backbone of our decision-making and our work is based on the principles of scientific integrity and transparency that are both expected and deserved by the American people. I am proud of the EPA's research efforts and the sound use of science and technology to fulfill the EPA's mission to protect human health and safeguard the natural environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

[4] http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=18594