

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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### Opening Statement Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings Hearing on “Recommendations of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking” September 26, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today, we will hear from four members of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking.

Let me start by saying this. Frankly, when most people think of “evidence-based” policymaking, they don’t think of the current Administration or recent actions by Congress. That’s not the first thing that jumps to mind. But that is why today’s hearing is so important. Too often, the American people see firsthand how policies that Congress puts in place are completely unrelated to the facts.

Take voter fraud, for example. President Trump claimed that three to five million people voted fraudulently in the last election. He had no evidence for his claim. None. To their credit, some Republicans have even pointed this out. Yet, now the American people are being forced to spend their tax dollars on a new presidential commission that is trying to hunt for evidence to back up the President’s unsubstantiated claim.

Take healthcare. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that tens of millions of people will lose their health insurance if Republican plans to repeal the Affordable Care Act go through. Again, to their credit, a handful of Republicans have refused to go along with this. Yet, the majority continues to push repeal with no viable alternative for the millions of families.

Take Planned Parenthood. Our Committee conducted an investigation of allegations against the group. To his credit, our former Chairman, Rep. Chaffetz, reported on national television that we found absolutely no evidence to support those allegations. Yet, despite our findings, the Republican leadership in the House spent millions of dollars on a new special committee to continue harassing Planned Parenthood in search of evidence that never existed.

Take immigration. President Trump and congressional Republicans have argued that we need to limit the number of refugees we accept into our country because they supposedly utilize too many government benefits. Yet, the White House reportedly squelched an internal report based on economic data showing just the opposite—that refugees provide a net economic benefit to our nation of more than \$63 billion. However, instead of changing their policy to reflect these facts, the White House reportedly ordered the report to be stripped of all references to the

benefits that refugees provide. Just took them out. That left only a biased and inaccurate picture that happens to match their political narrative.

On this topic, we are sending letters this morning to the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services seeking documents about their actions on this report, and I ask unanimous consent that our letters be included in the record for today's hearing.

Finally, take the most significant long-term challenge our nation—and the world—will face for decades to come: climate change. We have just seen the massive devastation caused by Hurricanes Maria, Irma, and Harvey, which is projected to cost hundreds of billions of dollars.

We have heard for the past six years from the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office that climate change is one of the top risks to the financial and national security of our country. This finding is based on overwhelming scientific evidence.

A few weeks ago, the *Miami Herald* asked the Republican Mayor of Miami about Hurricane Irma, and this is how he responded:

“This is the time to talk about climate change. This is the time that the president and the EPA and whoever makes decisions needs to talk about climate change. This is a truly, truly poster child for what is to come.”

Of course, he is saying what we all know in our hearts. We need to anchor our public policy on sound evidence, not baseless ideology. We cannot pick and choose which evidence we recognize and which evidence we ignore because of politics.

Today's hearing goes right to the core mission of our Committee. Collecting evidence—and making policy recommendations based on that evidence—is exactly what the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform was designed to do.

When we do our jobs correctly, it leads to important reforms. For example, this Committee recently approved a bill that Representative Farenthold and I introduced to provide federal employees who blow the whistle the right to appeal their cases in courts other than the Federal Circuit.

This important reform responds to evidence that the Federal Circuit is unfavorable to whistleblowers and that expanding the right to appeal to other courts will not result in a flood of appeals.

I thank the witnesses for being here to share their findings. This Committee approved the legislation that created this Commission, and I hope we can work in a bipartisan manner to advance legislation to implement its recommendations.