



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Markup of:

H.R. 8613, the NSF and USDA Interagency Research Act

H.R. 8665, the Supercritical Geothermal Research & Development Act

H.R. 8673, the Expanding Partnerships for Innovation and Competitiveness Act

H.R. 8674, the Milestones for Advanced Nuclear Fuel Act

June 13, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Lucas. Good morning, everyone, today we will consider four good bipartisan bills.

The first bill up, the NSF and USDA Interagency Research Act sponsored by Chairman Lucas and Representative Salinas, is an important one for my constituency. The Salinas valley in my district is considered the “Salad Bowl of the World;” it earned that title for growing roughly 70% of the nation's lettuce. Salinas Valley is a community that has and can continue to benefit from advances in agriculture technologies and increased resilience to climate change. H.R. 8613 will serve that end by helping facilitate the collaboration between the world class research enterprise enabled by the National Science Foundation, and the USDA’s expertise in agricultural sciences and partnering with farmers through the extension service. I enthusiastically support this bill and thank my colleagues for their leadership on this critical issue.

The next bill, also sponsored by Chairman Lucas and Representative Salinas, is the Supercritical Geothermal Research & Development Act. Supercritical geothermal technologies operate in extreme conditions, deeper into the earth’s crust than conventional systems in order to access rock formations at fantastically high temperatures. What sets supercritical geothermal apart from conventional geothermal systems is that it frees geothermal energy from what have, until now, been geographic restraints and supercharges its potential output. This technology could result in geothermal systems that are deployable virtually anywhere in the United States and that have the capacity to produce an estimated 90 gigawatts of electricity across the nation. H.R. 8665 directs DOE to focus on solving the current challenges facing this technology and delivering this resource to market so that it can make a meaningful contribution to addressing the climate crisis.

The “Expanding Partnerships for Innovation and Competitiveness Act” or “EPIC Act” establishes a nonprofit foundation that would support the National Institute for Standards and Technology. We all know how important NIST is to our safety, economy, and industrial competitiveness. At the same time, the agency faces steep budget cuts, failing infrastructure, and declining staff morale. I want to be clear that H.R. 8673 is not intended to supplant funding for NIST. We must fully resource the agency to carry out its critical responsibilities efficiently and effectively. However, this bill will help complement NIST activities and funding to help it fulfill its growing mission. We have models for this that work, including the NIH Foundation. Now is the time to fully enable NIST as well. I thank Representative Stevens and Obernolte for their thoughtful bill.

The last bill we will consider is the Milestones for Advanced Nuclear Fuel Act, sponsored by Representatives Williams and Sorensen. This bill directs the Department of Energy to use a milestone-based approach to accelerate the development and demonstration of technologies that produce nuclear fuels that will be essential to the next generation of advanced reactors. Under this approach, companies only receive federal funding after reaching agreed-upon technical milestones. This flexible approach accelerates the transition of new technologies from the lab to the market while maintaining good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. It is currently being utilized by DOE’s fusion energy program. At a White House event just last week, DOE announced milestone agreements with all 8 innovative fusion companies that it had selected last year. I can certainly see value in applying this promising model to the development of other critical clean energy technologies like advanced nuclear fuels, and H.R. 8674 will do just that.

I support all of these bills before us today and look forward to their ultimate passage, once again I thank the Chairman, and I yield back.