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

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Unearthing Innovation: The Future of Subsurface Science and Technology in the United States

July 26, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Williams, for holding today's hearing, and I would also like to welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses for being here to discuss this important topic.

Climate change causes real and present threats to our constituents and communities. As the country strives to reach our goal of net-zero emissions as quickly as possible, we must broaden and accelerate our approach to advancing new technologies that will get us there. Just last month, this Committee held a hearing about the revolutionary potential that fusion energy has as a clean energy source – as we see every day in that giant fusion reactor in the sky called the sun. And today we are turning to subsurface science and examining our ability to unlock the immense geothermal energy resource that resides well below our feet.

With help from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Department of Energy is conducting important efforts to position the U.S. to use our subsurface resources effectively. But we all need to recognize that this is going to require a long-term effort to adequately improve our ability to assess, monitor, and access critical subsurface resources.

While a lot of progress has been made in the past few years, we need to double down on this work *now* – and this Committee has the opportunity to help make that happen. A better understanding of the subsurface would not only pave the way to incorporating more geothermal energy into our electric grid, but also enable advancements in geologic carbon and hydrogen storage. All of these technologies are expected to play a substantial role in our clean energy future, so we really don't have time to waste.

In addition, we will be discussing the importance of subsurface science in accelerating nuclear waste cleanup projects at legacy waste sites across the country, some of which date back to the Manhattan Project. The communities around these sites deserve safe and healthy environments, and we should be doing everything in our power to ensure that that's exactly what they have.

For all of these reasons, I think this hearing is good step forward in improving our national capability for subsurface science for a broad range of important applications. I look forward to today's conversation, and thank the witnesses again for being here today.