



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Hearing:

Overview of the Science and Energy Research Enterprise of the U.S. Department of Energy

May 27, 2021

Good morning everyone, and thank you, Madam Secretary, for appearing before us today. It is so great to see you. As you know, this Committee has jurisdiction over all of the Department of Energy's essential science and energy research and development activities, laboratories, and facilities. So I very much look forward to working with you throughout this Congress.

We are meeting today at a critical time in history. Unfortunately, climate change remains a growing threat across the world. Many of us have seen first-hand the devastating effects it can have in our communities, especially our front-line and disadvantaged communities. At the same time, this novel coronavirus has substantially disrupted the world as we knew it. And that includes much of the critical scientific research that we spend a lot of our time on this Committee learning about and discussing.

But with great challenges come great opportunities. We are currently in the midst of budget season, and are very eagerly awaiting the release of President Biden's detailed budget request. I was pleased to see the preliminary request, which includes a 27% increase from the FY21 levels for the Department of Energy's applied energy programs. This includes support for advanced nuclear technologies, electric vehicles, and hydrogen production just to name a few. There are brighter days on the horizon.

Members of this Committee are also currently working on a bipartisan reauthorization of the DOE Office of Science. I support the Administration's goal of additional funding for this Office's critical efforts to improve our competitiveness and decarbonize our country. However, I would also urge the Administration to consider the benefits of additional funding to support some of our nation's most important science and energy research programs and facilities. The discretionary request for the Office of Science includes a \$400 million increase to a total of \$7.4 billion. While this is certainly appreciated, I believe that this level of growth is not sufficient for the current needs of the world-class user facilities, research programs, and national laboratories stewarded by the Office. So I hope that we will do better when Congress acts on DOE's budget request later this year.

Moving beyond the budget, we are here today to provide an opportunity for our Members to ask questions pertaining to any and all of the science and energy research activities carried out by the Department. Constituents from Member districts on both sides of the aisle benefit greatly from these programs, and we believe it is our duty to ensure the responsible use of their tax dollars. I am proud to say that through a lot of thoughtful hard work and dedication, we were able to authorize many of these programs in a bipartisan fashion in the Energy Act of 2020, which was signed into law late last year. We look forward to working with you on the implementation of that law, among many other areas of mutual interest.

One last note to my colleagues – the Secretary will have to depart at 4pm. So I encourage you to keep your questions to 5 minutes so that we all have ample opportunity to engage with the Secretary, and I will endeavor to do the same.

With that, I would like to thank you again for being here, and I look forward to a productive discussion this morning.