



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Energy Subcommittee Hearing:

Science and Energy Research Infrastructure Needs of the Department of Energy

April 27, 2022

Good morning everyone, and thank you, Under Secretary Richmond, for appearing before us today. 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 over the rest of this Congress.

I want to focus my remarks this morning on the DOE Office of Science. During my tenure on the Science Committee, I have observed that the Office of Science often flies under the radar amongst policymakers and the public alike. This has always surprised me because the Office, which was funded at around \$7.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2022, is the lead federal agency supporting scientific research for energy applications and the nation's largest supporter of research in the physical sciences.

Not only does the Office support research directly, it also supports the development, construction, and operation of a broad portfolio of large-scale experiments and unique, open-access scientific user facilities. These facilities are critically important for the development of new technologies and for exploring the frontiers of our scientific understanding by researchers from both academia and industry. In carrying out its mission, the Office of Science also has stewardship of ten of the seventeen DOE national laboratories.

So why does the work of this Office sometimes get overlooked by policymakers and the public? I think it's easy to get lost in the details and gloss over the importance of some of these scientific tools. However, the fact remains that the activities that the Office of Science supports are vital to improving our competitiveness and decarbonizing our country. The activities supported by this office are essential to advancing transformative industries that are important to all of us and our national security, from next generation batteries and microelectronics to quantum science and carbon-free fusion energy systems. It should also be mentioned that the Office of Science supplies the nation with isotopes that are essential to everyday life, with uses ranging from cancer treatments to food sterilization.

Dr. Richmond, I know that you share my belief in the importance of this Office. Yet the reality is that successive Administrations, including the current one, have repeatedly presented budget

requests to Congress that would underfund the Office of Science relative to the activities the nation has tasked it to undertake. While I support the Administration's goal of additional funding for the Office and it is certainly appreciated, the level of growth proposed for Fiscal Year 2023 is simply not sufficient for the current needs of the world-class user facilities, research programs, and national laboratories stewarded by the Office, as expressed to the Committee by the Department itself.

As an example of these deficiencies, the Fiscal Year 2023 request for the Office of Science's fusion program would amount to a 1.4% increase over the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriated level. If enacted, this would effectively be a cut to the program when annual research cost inflation levels are taken into account. Ironically, this funding level was announced shortly after the White House held a three-hour summit in March to announce a new fusion energy initiative and discuss the progress and potential benefits of improved support for fusion research and development. You and the Secretary both provided quite eloquent and encouraging remarks at this event, so you can understand my puzzlement at the budget request for fusion.

More broadly, I believe you know that this Committee has prioritized reauthorizing the work of the Office of Science for some time now, and there now exists bicameral and bipartisan support in the form of companion DOE Science for the Future bills in the House and Senate. The House also included this bill in the America COMPETES Act of 2022, which was endorsed by the Administration. I intend to continue to press for a healthy funding level of for the Office of Science when Congress acts on DOE's budget request later this year. And I urge the Administration to consider the importance of additional funding to support some of our nation's most important science and energy research programs and facilities as you start your work to prepare next year's request.

With that, I would like to thank you again for being here, and I look forward to working with you.