Abandoned Well Remediation Research and Development Act of 2021

The Abandoned Well Remediation Research and Development Act of 2021 would establish a research, development, and demonstration program at the Department of Energy to support and accelerate the remediation of abandoned wells, funded at $30 million in FY22 rising to $35 million in FY26. Improving the plugging and remediation process for abandoned wells could reduce costs of plugging which currently range between $30,000 to 1,000,000 per well, improve efficiency of remediation, mitigate environmental harms, and reduce methane emissions. Focus areas for this research include:

1. **Data Collection:** Improving technology to pinpoint and map the location of wells is one of the most crucial steps to remediating and reclaiming abandoned wells. An understanding of where wells are located and how many abandoned wells there are in the country would be essential to developing a plugging program. Current estimates range from 700,000 to 3,000,000 abandoned wells.
2. **Reclamation Process:** The plugging, remediation, reclamation, and repurposing of abandoned wells can benefit from technological improvements to increase effectiveness as well as decrease cost. This includes improving the process for plugging remote wells, researching use of low carbon cement for plugging, and repurposing abandoned wells for geothermal power production and CCUS.
3. **Understanding of Methane Emissions:** This research would focus on improving understanding of conditions that effect methane emission rates of abandoned wells, and why certain wells are deemed “super emitters” - emitting much higher amounts of methane than similar abandoned wells.