

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Energy

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Full Committee Hearing
“Department of Energy: Management and Priorities”
January 30, 2018

Thank you Chairman Smith for holding this hearing, and thank you Under Secretary Dabbar and Under Secretary Menezes for being here today. I am very pleased that we are finally beginning to hold hearings with Senate-confirmed representatives of the Administration testifying in front of our committee. I hope that this means we will finally have Secretary Perry in this room shortly after the President’s 2019 budget request is released – which was common practice for this Committee before last year.

There are a wide range of issues regarding the direction and management of DOE’s incredibly important portfolio of facilities and programs that I hope we will be able to discuss in-depth this morning. I would like to begin the conversation by touching on just a few of them.

At this point it shouldn’t surprise anyone here that I am still deeply concerned about the Department’s budget proposal for 2018. I’m sure I speak for many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle when I say I’m even more concerned about what it implies about the Administration’s priorities going forward. The 2018 budget proposal would have cut sustainable transportation and renewable energy by 70% and energy efficiency by 80%. It would have cut critical research on the electric grid and fossil fuels in half. It would have cut the Office of Science by 17% and nuclear energy by 30%. And it would have eliminated ARPA-E, the Loan Programs Office, and our entire portfolio of Energy Innovation Hubs. All of these programs have strong records of success to justify not only their existence, but increased investments. These proposed cuts are baffling. As many of my colleagues have pointed out before, we won’t balance the budget by slashing our research funding. For an insignificant short-term deficit reduction, we will make the United States less competitive, lose jobs, harm our public health, and hobble our international R&D partnerships.

The Administration rationalized these cuts by suggesting the private sector would simply start funding these key research areas once the federal government cuts them from its budget. But this is not based on anything resembling a rigorous review process, let alone reality. In fact, Administration officials confirmed that they did not engage with the private sector **at all** to determine what industry would be able or willing to pick up. Mr. Dabbar and Mr. Menezes, I recognize that you’re not really responsible for this proposal given that you were only confirmed in November. With that said, I hope that under your leadership we can get back to reality and continue our strong support for these high-value research programs. They are vital for American competitiveness, our quality of life, and our scientific leadership.

I would also like to get a much better understanding of rationale behind the new organizational structure for the Department that was announced in December. In my view, the reorganization

led by Secretary Moniz made a lot of sense. Having a single Under Secretary for Science and Energy enabled improved coordination and collaboration across DOE's nonmilitary research enterprise. Specifically, it helped break the historical, unproductive stovepipes between the DOE Office of Science and the applied energy offices. So it's not clear to me why breaking them up into separate Under Secretariats again is a step in the right direction. And putting the Department's daunting environmental management mission, which previously had its own Under Secretary, under the Science portfolio adds its own challenges. I understand that Mr. Dabbar has a unique background in overseeing those issues, but then perhaps it would've made more sense to stick with the previous structure and make him the Under Secretary for Management after all.

But whatever the DOE organizational chart says, I hope we can all find common ground on ensuring that the Department's science and energy innovation pipeline is as strong as possible. I look forward to working with you both on these and other issues in the months and years ahead.

Thank you again for testifying, and thank you Mr. Chairman. I yield back.