

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Subcommittee on Energy
Subcommittee on Environment
“The Future of Fossil: Energy Technologies Leading the Way”
July 17, 2018

Good morning and welcome to our witnesses. Thank you, Chairman Weber and Chairman Biggs, for holding this hearing to discuss the future of fossil energy.

Certainly, we have seen how advances in science and engineering can produce large-scale economic value in this sector, and historically our federal R&D agencies have played a major historic role in this process.

Just over a decade ago, we had little idea of the fossil resources that would be available to us today. However, due to some critical research investments made by the Department of Energy over 40 years ago, coupled with rising oil prices in recent decades, the U.S. underwent the shale gas revolution that brought major natural gas resources online, and with it, a sharp increase in domestic oil production.

That DOE program wrapped up in the early 1990s when a private company took that federally supported research and used it to trigger the oil and gas boom we see today.

I think my colleagues would agree that that is the model for DOE’s energy technology programs we all hope to see – federal investments shepherding transformational technologies to the marketplace, even when the endpoint is not clear at the beginning of the process.

That brings us to what should be the fundamental question we consider today: where should the Department of Energy be investing its limited dollars in this area? If the standard of identifying a federal role rests on whether the private industry has the capacity to invest in R&D, then I think the answer to this question is that DOE should focus its investments on reducing and wherever possible eliminating the environmental impacts of the production and use of these resources. At present, there is unfortunately little incentive for industry to spend major R&D dollars to protect the environment, and even less incentive in the private sector to prevent the most devastating potential impacts of climate change.

This is why I am so pleased to cosponsor H.R. 5745, the bipartisan Fossil Energy Research and Development Act of 2018, which Ranking Member Veasey, Mr. McKinley, and I introduced in May.

This bill would reauthorize and expand important activities to develop and scale up innovative carbon capture, utilization, and storage technologies. It would also launch vital new initiatives on carbon dioxide removal and methane leak detection and mitigation, among other areas. In all

likelihood, our society will continue to use and develop our fossil energy resources for at least several more decades, so these technologies will be absolutely critical to minimizing the harm they would otherwise cause to our public health and the environment.

Before I close, I would note that I am surprised we are holding a hearing on DOE's fossil energy technology development activities without inviting DOE's Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy to testify. It seems to me that it would be important for us to ask him to provide a better explanation for why the Administration is proposing a 31% cut to DOE's fossil energy research and development activities. This is in stark contrast to the stated positions of the President, who has been praising "clean coal" and vowing to end a supposed war on "clean coal" throughout his time in office so far.

The rhetoric is not matched by the necessary resources, and this Committee needs to know why not.

So, I hope that we will have Assistant Secretary Winberg before our Committee to discuss these issues further in the near future. And I look forward to working with the Administration and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the months ahead to steer a better course as we aim to accelerate the development and deployment of these next generation technologies that could significantly improve our environment, our health, and our nation's economy.

Thank you and I yield back.