

Opening Statement

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Full Committee Hearing
Department of Energy Science & Technology Priorities

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Thank you, Chairman Smith for holding this hearing. I would also like to thank Secretary Moniz for being here today to discuss the proposed DOE budget and for his continued service to our nation. Over the past year, you have proved that the President made a wise choice in selecting you to lead the Department at this critical time in our nation's history.

Let me start by reminding my colleagues here today that we have seen how government research can pay off when it comes to energy development. DOE-supported research was key to the development of high-efficiency gas turbines for coal plants, nuclear reactors developed at federal labs, and the directional drilling and hydraulic fracturing practices that have led to the shale gas boom of today. But we should remember that those achievements required decades of federal investment, the overwhelming majority of which was focused on fossil and nuclear energy. I continue to strongly support research to make today's technologies safer, cleaner, and more efficient, but we also have to find the greatest value for our investment of taxpayer dollars. Today it is the emerging energy technology sectors that can most benefit from government support. That is where the priorities set by the Fiscal Year 2015 budget request come into play.

I am pleased with much of the Department's budget request for applied energy research this year. If adopted, the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, ARPA-E, and the Office of Electricity would all receive a much-needed boost to advance the development of clean energy technologies that will be vital to our national security, our economy, and the environment in the decades to come. This includes important, targeted investments that will help place the U.S. in a position to be a world leader in advanced manufacturing related to energy use and generation.

However, I do have concerns with other areas of the Department's proposed budget. For example, the Office of Science would receive a very minimal increase – less than 1 percent, which is even below the rate of research-related inflation, so this is effectively a cut. As we all know, the Office of Science is the largest supporter of basic research in the physical sciences in the country, and it operates more than 30 national scientific user facilities whose applications go well beyond energy innovation. Our nation's top researchers from industry, academia, and other federal agencies use these facilities to examine everything from new materials that will better meet our military's needs, to new pharmaceuticals that will better treat disease, to even examining the fundamental building blocks of the universe. Given this critical role in our nation's innovation enterprise, I look forward to having a productive discussion about the justification for the Administration's proposed funding for the Office.

Also, I recognize that the Department is continuing to carry out several major demonstration projects using prior year funds to further advance our ability to capture and store carbon emissions from power plants. I also know that you recently issued a significant loan guarantee solicitation for new fossil fuel projects, but I would still like a clearer explanation for the Department's proposed cuts to carbon capture and storage *research* programs. Of course, demonstration projects and loan guarantees have a very important role in getting new technologies to the marketplace, but they are not necessarily replacements for longer-term, higher risk research activities.

I fully understand that the Administration is working in a tough budget environment, and that trade-offs and compromises have to be made. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Secretary, and my colleagues across the aisle, to address the concerns we have and to work with you to ensure you have the direction, tools, and resources you need to help secure our nation's energy future.

With that I yield back the balance of my time.