

OPENING STATEMENT

**Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Subcommittee on Energy

*“Oil and Gas Technology Innovation”*

May 3, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is an interesting topic for this subcommittee to examine today. Certainly, the oil and gas sector is one area in which we see how advances in science and engineering can produce large-scale economic value, and our Federal R&D agencies have played a 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 previous decades, the American economy underwent the shale gas revolution bringing 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 the research performed by DOE and used it to ignite 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 of today: where should the Department of Energy be investing limited dollars in this area? If the standard of identifying of a government role rests in whether the private industry has the capacity to invest in R&D, then I think the answer to the question of DOE investments in oil and gas is that the Federal role should be very limited. After all, it is hard to think of a sector that is much more commercial and on average more profitable, than the oil and gas industry.

For this reason, I believe the Department should focus its investments on environmental mitigation. At present, there is little incentive for industry to spend major R&D dollars to protect the environment.

If this hearing is intended to highlight the importance of oil to the economy, hopefully I can save us some time. I am from Dallas. Oil and gas will play an important role in our nation’s economy for decades.

My hope is that an outcome of their hearing will be to push the Trump Administration to reconsider its position to drastically reduce R&D funding for fossil energy. I would support that endeavor, as long as it comes along with strong support DOE's other energy technology programs.

When it comes to R&D funding, Republicans and Democrats should be speaking with one voice. Investments in R&D benefit our nation.

In closing, I would challenge the current Administration and my colleagues in Congress to be forward-looking in our push to develop the next generation energy economy. Drilling our way to economic growth while ignoring the long-term impacts cannot be the answer as we face a warming climate and the significant consequences that come along with it. Our environment and the health of the public is on the line.

Thank you, and I yield back.