

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Alan Grayson (D-FL)
Subcommittee on Energy
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Nuclear Energy Innovation and the National Laboratories
Energy Subcommittee Hearing

May 13, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Weber, for holding this hearing, and thank you to our witnesses for agreeing to participate this morning.

For decades, the federal government has provided critical support for energy R&D. From solar and wind energy to natural gas recovery, many of the technologies that are helping us transition to a clean energy economy and creating entire new industries wouldn't be nearly as far along as they are today, or would not exist at all, without the benefit of federal support and public-private partnerships. The same certainly holds true for nuclear energy.

This morning we are here to discuss the federal role in developing the next generation of nuclear energy technologies, and how this support may be better structured going forward. I am particularly pleased that, as part of this discussion, we will be learning much more about some innovative new fusion energy concepts that have the potential to dramatically accelerate the development and deployment of commercial fusion reactors.

Fusion holds the promise of providing a practically limitless supply of clean energy to the world. We're actually already dependent on it – the energy we get from that fusion reactor in the sky, better known as the sun, is essential to the existence of life on Earth, including us. Of course, it's a bit trickier for people to replicate what the stars are able to do with sheer gravity. But based on several developments in recent years that I know we'll be hearing more about today, I am confident we will get there – and perhaps far sooner than many realize. This is why I am such a strong supporter of fusion energy research, and I believe that now is the right time to build and operate experiments that can finally demonstrate that a man-made fusion system can consistently produce far more energy than it takes to fuel it.

That said, I am eager to learn more about the costs and benefits of a wide range of new nuclear technologies over the course of the hearing.

I certainly support an “all of the above” approach toward a clean energy economy and achieving safer, more cost-effective, and environmentally friendly ways to utilize nuclear energy can play an important role in this mix. We just need to make sure that we are making the smartest investments we can with our limited resources, and that they are in the best interests of the American people.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses for being willing to provide their insights today, and I look forward to working with the Chairman and with all of the stakeholders in this critical area moving forward.

Thank you, and I yield back my remaining time.