

OPENING STATEMENT – Ranking Member Grayson

Recommendations of the Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy
Laboratories

November 18, 2015 - 2:00pm

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing today on a very important topic, our national laboratories. I would also like to thank our witnesses for offering their expert recommendations and insights.

The United States invests more than any other nation in research and development, yet, when you put that investment in context as a percentage of our GDP, it becomes much less impressive. Over a number of Congresses and Administrations, we have failed to make the smart choices and long-term investments to maintain our position as a global leader in innovation. Our R&D investment is stagnating, while other countries are seizing on the opportunity to out-innovate the United States. China is currently on course to overtake the United States in actual dollars spent sometime in the next decade.

However, the United States has an incredible innovation network - our national labs. In order to take advantage of them, we must provide the national labs with the necessary resources to not only maintain and grow a vast array of facilities and equipment, but also to fund the exploratory research that produces results we may have never expected.

Beyond providing more resources, *the Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories* has offered a number of substantive recommendations in their report, which we're here to talk about today. This Congress and this Administration can act on the Commission's recommendations immediately and make meaningful improvements to our network of national labs.

For years the relationship between the Department of Energy and the national labs has been a difficult one. The Commission attempted to find avenues to mend that relationship and make it more productive and effective. This motivation is apparent in a number of the recommendations, and I hope that the Department will take each one seriously.

Providing laboratories with increased levels of independence and freedom is bound to cause some transitional issues. But the end result could create a more empowered workforce and, if done correctly, a more innovative atmosphere that provides scientists the freedom needed to produce truly groundbreaking outcomes.

The Commission's overall message is clear: the national labs are unique and irreplaceable. They must be a high priority in our budgetary decisions both now and in the future. I will certainly be a strong advocate on that point and I urge my colleagues to join me in that effort.

Thank you again to the witnesses for being here today, and I yield back the balance of my time.