

OPENING STATEMENT

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

Department of Energy Oversight: Energy Innovation Hubs
Energy Subcommittee Hearing

June 17, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Weber for holding this hearing, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

First established in 2010, the Energy Innovation Hubs are modeled on legendary research institutions like Bell Laboratories, which unfortunately no longer exist to any great extent in the private sector due to an increased emphasis on shorter-term returns. Each of these large multi-investigator, multi-disciplinary Hubs is focused on addressing major challenges to advancing new energy technologies. In short, these centers of excellence are tackling a variety of areas that may well be vital to our clean energy future.

They include: dramatically reducing the costs for new energy storage technologies; advanced computer modeling to improve the safety and efficiency of nuclear reactors; addressing our limited supply of critical materials that are essential to a wide range of clean energy technologies; and learning from the world of plant biology so that we can find new, far more efficient ways to create a usable fuel from three simple ingredients - sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide.

I believe it is long past time for Congress to authorize and provide legislative guidance for the Hubs model - which is why I included language to do this as part of the America Competes Reauthorization Act of 2014, and again in 2015, both of which were co-sponsored by every Democratic Member of the Committee. I particularly appreciate Ranking Member Grayson's good work in introducing and advancing a bill to finally authorize the Hubs this year.

I want to thank all of you again for being here today. Your work in these key technology areas is a clear example of why we need to not just sustain, but significantly increase federal investments in research across the board, and not just in research areas that have partisan support.

If the past is any guide, these investments in fundamental and applied research, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, and yes, even social and behavioral sciences, will have a major impact on both our nation's economic competitiveness and our quality of life.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.