

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Full Committee Hearing
Department of Energy Science & Technology Priorities
2318 Rayburn House Office Building
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Statement

Thank you, Chairman Smith for holding this hearing today. I would also like to welcome Secretary Moniz and express my appreciation for his willingness to serve the nation again, as he has many times before. Secretary Moniz, you are obviously extraordinarily well-qualified, and I believe you are the right person to lead the Department of Energy at this critical time.

Let me start by saying that, overall, I am pleased with the Department's budget request this year. If approved, the Office of Science, ARPA-E, the Office of Electricity, and the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy 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 our environment in the decades to come.

It is worth 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 support research to make today's technologies cleaner and more efficient, but I believe that it is time to level the playing field and introduce real competition to the markets. That is where the priorities set by this budget request come into play.

We have to find the greatest value for our investment of the taxpayer dollar, and today it is the emerging energy technology sectors that can most benefit from government support.

I think it is also important to note that DOE's Office of Science is actually 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. I believe that this stewardship of unique scientific research, including the nation's major national user facilities, is another important role that I hope the Department will continue to make one of its highest priorities.

It's no secret that Congress's inability to date to come to an agreement on a sensible budget plan has led to some devastating cuts to many of these important programs, with serious impacts to our nation's future. I think this budget request is a step in the right direction, and I look forward to working with you, Secretary Moniz, and my colleagues across the aisle to provide you with the direction, the tools, and the resources you need to get us back on track.

With that I yield back the balance of my time.