

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

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Full Committee

*“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the Department of Energy for Fiscal Year 2017”*  
March 22, 2016

Thank you, Chairman Smith for holding this hearing. I would also like to thank Secretary Moniz for being here today to discuss the proposed DOE budget and for his continued service to our nation.

Let me start by reminding my colleagues that we have many examples of how government-supported energy research in a wide range of areas can pay off. For example, DOE-supported research was key to the development of high-efficiency gas turbines for coal plants, nuclear reactors, and the directional drilling and hydraulic fracturing technologies and techniques that have led to the shale gas boom of today. But we should remember that those achievements required decades of federal investment.

This is why I was so pleased with the announcement of Mission Innovation, a commitment that the President and leaders from 19 other nations made to double their government-supported clean energy R&D investments over the next five years. And I was equally excited by the concurrent announcement of the Breakthrough Energy Coalition. This private sector initiative consists of 28 of the world’s top private capital investors – recruited and led by Bill Gates – who have pledged to support potentially transformative clean energy technologies, with a focus on opportunities in Mission Innovation nations.

Given these recent developments, I looked forward to reviewing the President’s Budget Request this year to learn more about how these initiatives are being implemented, as well as the other important programs that the Department is undertaking.

The FY 2017 budget request has many positive features. I certainly support the Department's full requests for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, ARPA-E, and the Office of Electricity. I am also pleased to see that the Department is continuing to make progress in coordinating several critical research areas that cut across its various programs, including the energy-water nexus – about which I personally am very concerned. The proposed new Energy-Water Desalination Hub is another important step in the right direction.

However, I do have concerns with some other areas of the Department's proposed budget. Similar to last year's budget request, the fusion energy program within the Office of Science and the advanced reactor program within the Office of Nuclear Energy would both receive sizable cuts under this proposal. Over the long term, both of these types of advanced technologies have the potential to play a major role in enabling a vibrant low-carbon economy. So I hope we can discuss this topic further and see if, perhaps, these funding levels – and in the case of fusion, the program's continued inability to support innovative new research areas – should be reconsidered.

In addition, I have concerns with the proposed budget for the Office of Fossil Energy. The Department is proposing large cuts to or the outright elimination of a number of worthwhile programs carried out by this Office with little justification provided in the budget request. You are also proposing to reprogram funds previously appropriated for the Texas Clean Energy Project, an important first-of-a-kind commercial power plant that aims to capture 90% of the plant's carbon emissions. And by all accounts you are doing this with virtually no warning provided to either the project or those of us in Congress who have been such strong supporters of it over the last several years.

I certainly understand that sometimes new research projects are unsuccessful in meeting their initial goals and difficult decisions must be made to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used wisely. But this needs to be done in a clear and transparent fashion, with mutually understood milestones and potential consequences for not achieving them. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the case regarding the Department's recent actions that would effectively terminate this project, a project which could be a major step toward meeting our nation's – and indeed the world's – long-term goals to prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Secretary, and my colleagues on the Committee, to address the concerns we have and to ensure that you have the direction, tools, and resources you need to help secure our nation's energy future.

Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.