

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“Department of Energy Oversight: Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy”
Energy Subcommittee Hearing

March 24, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Smith for holding this hearing. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary Danielson and the other witnesses for being here today.

Back in 1962, before some of our witnesses today were born, President Kennedy challenged the country to win the global space race and put a man on the moon. America responded to this challenge by investing in education and research and development programs, and in improving our nation’s educational system. Eight short years later, Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon’s surface. Moreover, the R&D that accompanied America’s “moonshot” spurred entirely new industries and business initiatives.

Today, DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy is undertaking a SunShot — striving to meet a goal of making utility-scale solar systems cost competitive with other sources of electricity by the end of the decade. EERE has been working with ARPA-E and industry leaders on SunShot to try to achieve a 75% cost reduction, and it is actually ahead of schedule to meeting this goal. Based on what has been achieved to date, it is clear that over the next few years, solar panels and other solar power system components will become more efficient, cost effective, and accessible for businesses, homeowners, and the federal government, which is our nation’s largest energy consumer.

Renewable energy plays a critical role in the future of our country. I would like to remind my colleagues that we have seen how government-supported research can pay off when it comes to energy development. And I am highlighting this solar energy initiative in particular today because it further demonstrates our need to remain committed to scientific discovery and advancing new technologies. It speaks not only to the mission of EERE, but to the future of our nation’s ability to meet our energy and environmental needs, all while ensuring that we will be a net exporter rather than an importer of products in the growing clean energy economy.

If DOE’s proposed budget is adopted, EERE would receive a much-needed boost. Beyond SunShot, the geothermal and marine energy research programs would establish important new test sites to help advance next generation technologies, and the Department’s important advanced manufacturing program would expand considerably.

I am also pleased to see that EERE is clearly making progress in coordinating several critical research areas that cut across the Department’s various programs, including the energy-water nexus – which I personally am very concerned about. These are just a few examples, and I look

forward to hearing more about each of the other critical activities that EERE is carrying out – or will carry out if Congress will simply meet your budget request.

I recognize that there is still a lot of work to be done. And it is my hope that we can work together, Dr. Danielson, along with my colleagues across the aisle, to ensure that you have the direction, tools, and resources you need to help secure our nation's energy future.

With that I yield back the balance of my time.