

“Oversight of the U.S. Department of Energy”
Committee on Oversight and Accountability
9:00 AM, Thursday, May 23, 2024
Statement for the Record
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)

Since its inception, the Department of Energy (DOE) has been a cornerstone of American scientific and technological progress, playing a pivotal role in addressing our nation's most pressing energy and security challenges.

The DOE was established in 1977, in response to the energy crises of the 1970s. Since then, it has been at the forefront of scientific innovation and energy research. The DOE's national laboratories, such as Lawrence Berkeley, Oak Ridge, and Argonne, have been incubators of groundbreaking research. These institutions have made significant contributions to various fields, including nuclear energy, renewable energy, and advanced materials. As we navigate the complexities of climate change and transition to a clean energy future, DOE has been hard at work deploying clean energy technologies and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting the energy industry with cutting edge research and technology.

One of the DOE's most notable achievements is its role in the development and commercialization of renewable energy technologies. The SunShot Initiative, launched in 2011, aimed to make solar energy cost-competitive with other forms of electricity by 2020. Today, solar is the cheapest source of energy.

Today, DOE is bolstering the nascent Offshore wind industry which is poised to deliver over 100 gigawatts (GW) by 2050. The DOE is actively supporting the development of offshore wind technologies through research, grants, and partnerships with industry leaders. Projects like the Atlantic Coast Wind Energy Initiative are paving the way for large-scale offshore wind farms that could generate thousands of megawatts of electricity, providing a significant boost to our renewable energy capacity.

Recently, DOE announced \$48 million in new funding to accelerate offshore wind technology development and manufacturing. Offshore wind in the Atlantic Ocean is already powering hundreds of thousands of homes on the East Coast and will be a key piece to our emissions reduction goals, especially in Virginia. DOE and Secretary Granholm have recognized this and are taking swift action to ensure these goals are achievable.

DOE's new transmission rule “Building for the Future Through Electric Regional Transmission Planning and Cost Allocation” will ensure that we are able to achieve the full extent of clean energy deployment across the country. Congress must complement this action with passage of the Clean Electricity and Transmissions Acceleration Act to further facilitate the pace and scale of the clean energy buildout. DOE is also hiring 1,000 workers as part of its Clean Energy Corps to aid in the deployment of clean energy and emissions reduction projects.

These are just a handful of the actions the Department of Energy has taken to meet the Biden administration's ambitious climate goals. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) further empower the DOE to lead the nation's transition to a clean energy economy. The IRA secured the largest investment to advance energy security and combat climate change in American history, including \$4.5 billion for clean energy

initiatives and \$1.8 billion for low-income American homes. The IIJA provides DOE with \$62 million clean energy a, deployment, project support, and research development. These amount to the single largest investment in our climate in our history. The DOE's leadership in deploying these funds will ensure that we build a robust and equitable clean energy infrastructure that benefits all Americans.

Congressional Republicans have chosen to propagandize this progress as a war on energy. But an evolution towards clean energy is necessary to our security. Mischaracterizing efforts to deploy clean energy as harmful to our economy and energy security overlooks the critical reality that this is not just an environmental necessity but a national security imperative—domestic production of renewable energy will provide American industry with a competitive advantage and lessen our dependence on foreign oil.

Dependence on foreign oil makes us vulnerable to geopolitical conflicts and market volatility. The Biden administration is taking a smart approach to these challenges. For example, after Russia invaded Ukraine, the price of crude oil reached historic highs. The Biden administration stabilized world energy markets by authorizing several releases of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). The U.S. Department of the Treasury determined that this decision lowered gas prices by 17 to 42 cents per gallon. And in 2022, U.S. companies provided 50 percent of Europe's liquefied natural gas supplies to make up for the shriveling supply from Russia.

As evidenced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration recognizes that continued reliance on fossil fuels is a national security risk. Both the Biden administration and our partners in the EU are investing heavily in clean energy, electric vehicles, energy efficiency standards, and more.

DOE has a storied history of driving scientific and technological advancements that have strengthened our nation's energy security and economic prosperity. Today, the DOE is uniquely positioned to lead the charge in the Biden administration's pursuit of a clean energy future. By leveraging the DOE's expertise and innovative programs, we can deploy clean energy solutions that lower emissions, create jobs, and ensure a sustainable and equitable energy future for all Americans.