

Chairman Gary Palmer
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
“Examining the Biden Administration’s Energy and Environment
Spending Push”
February 26, 2025
As prepared for delivery

Welcome to the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the 119th Congress. I want to start by saying that it is an honor to serve as the Chairman of this Subcommittee. Congress has an important oversight responsibility that includes making sure our laws are working as intended and that the federal government is using taxpayer dollars responsibly. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this important endeavor.

Today’s hearing is entitled “Examining the Biden Administration’s Energy and Environment Spending Push.” Moments ago I noted the importance of ensuring that the federal government is being a good steward of taxpayer dollars. This is critical, particularly in the context of the extraordinary surge in spending and the explosion of new and expanded programs at the Department of Energy (or DOE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (or EPA), largely authorized and funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (or IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (or IRA). The two laws provided supplemental appropriations of \$97 billion and \$101.5 billion to DOE and EPA, respectively.

As this Subcommittee examined last Congress, spending large amounts of funding, particularly in short timeframes carries tremendous risk. For example, in a November 2024 report, the DOE Office of the Inspector General (OIG) noted that the IIJA, IRA, and 2023 Omnibus Appropriations law increased the DOE Loan Program Office’s authority to nearly half a trillion dollars. This is more than 23 times that of the program’s portfolio balance as of November 2021, when the IIJA was signed into law.

The situation only became more alarming as the Biden administration raced to finalize loans and spend down available grant funding in its final months. All three watchdog organizations here today, the EPA OIG, DOE OIG, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), have reported on past shortcomings within these agencies and risk factors for waste, fraud, and abuse. These risks increased under past infusions of funding as agencies rushed to move large amounts of funding in a short amount of time.

Unfortunately, history seems to be repeating itself, but we have a chance to try to minimize the damage. I want to emphasize that we are not insinuating that all applicants and recipients are guilty of wrongdoing. Rather, the sheer pace and volume with which this funding was awarded raises questions, and it is worth a pause to evaluate whether the appropriate due diligence was done to ensure taxpayer dollars went to eligible parties and the funds are being used appropriately.

I thank our witnesses for being here and sharing their expertise to guide and inform the Committee's efforts to identify potential misuse of federal funds and ensure that appropriate measures are taken moving forward to prevent future misuse of funds. This hearing is only one step of many to ensure that wasteful spending is curbed, and we hope to continue our collaboration with the OIGs, GAO, and the current administration to address this issue.

I now recognize the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Ms. Clarke, for her opening statement.