

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
“The Fiscal Year 2017 DOE Budget”
March 2, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today is our final Department of Energy budget hearing for the Obama administration. We are always delighted to have Secretary Moniz here and look forward to his remarks.

My concerns about prior years' budgets are repeated in this year's budget. I take serious issue with the nearly 10 percent boost in overall funding levels and I still question the direction DOE is taking on energy policy.

I should note that there are issues that we can agree with DOE, at least in principle, and there is much in the agency's Quadrennial Energy Review that I think we all can support. We all agree on the need to modernize and protect the nation's energy infrastructure and the need to have a well-trained and diversified energy workforce with the skills that energy markets will demand in the years ahead. We all recognize the importance of a more integrated North American energy system and the benefits of engaging in energy diplomacy and conducting ourselves like the energy superpower we have become. We agree on taking steps to improve energy efficiency and accountability, especially as regards the federal government's own use of energy as well as the functioning of DOE itself. And most of us agree on the agency's commitment to research and development.

But on many areas and the direction in which this agency is taking with its energy policy, I respectfully disagree. Most significantly, this budget continues to reflect the President's priority and treat climate change as DOE's overriding concern. One of DOE's stated priorities in the FY 2017 budget request is to "support ongoing implementation of the President's Climate Action Plan." We see this in the programs that have received proposed budget increases, like the \$2.1 billion for the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, as well as those facing cuts, such as the 43 percent cut in the Office of Fossil Energy.

In fact, the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy is slated to get more funds than the Offices of Nuclear, Fossil, Electricity, and ARPA-E *combined*. Within the budget's largest new program, the 21st Century Clean Transportation plan makes climate concerns the primary factor in transportation policy by inserting a new tax on oil that will raise gas prices by about 25 cents per gallon. This action alone speaks volumes about how badly off track this administration has gotten on energy policy. And I might add that the administration has chosen to make climate an agency priority without any statutory authority actually directing DOE to focus on global warming. As part of the Paris agreement, Obama and 19 other countries launched a program known as "Mission Innovation" in order to accelerate global green energy innovation by doubling the amount of our taxpayer dollars in clean energy R&D over the next five years.

The problem with this climate myopia is that it comes at the expense of other priorities that DOE should be more focused upon, like ensuring plentiful and affordable supplies of domestic energy, including fossil fuels. To me this runs counter to the very purpose for which the agency was created. Indeed, the Obama DOE's antipathy towards fossil fuels represents the first time the agency has so actively opposed an affordable domestic energy source.

Access to affordable and reliable energy is key to stimulating economic growth and strengthening our global competitiveness and it should be a priority for this agency. In contrast, putting climate first increases energy costs, restrains growth, destroys jobs, and reduces household spending power, especially low-income households.

The budget also evidences a misguided perspective on the proper role of government in energy policy. A cleaner, more advanced and efficient energy system can be achieved through private sector innovation and markets, supported by government-backed research and development - not a top down, government mandated approach. Yet almost everywhere in this budget we see DOE trying to expand its role and impose its own preferences on the private sector.

DOE's high budget request is bad enough, but the energy policy it would pay for is even worse. We can do much better in this budget, but we must prioritize affordable energy, economic growth, and jobs.

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