

Statement of Fred Upton
Energy Subcommittee Hearing on
“The Fiscal Year 2020 DOE Budget”
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As Prepared for Delivery

Secretary Perry, there is something about the Department of Energy that brings out enthusiasm about our nation’s energy and environmental future. And I think you demonstrate that enthusiasm more than most who have led the Department. I welcome your enthusiasm and look forward to your testimony this morning.

Over the past decade, we have emerged as the world’s leading producer of oil and natural gas. At the same time, we’re also leading the world in CO2 emissions reductions, a fact that proves that energy production and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive goals.

Today, we are more energy secure than at any point in our nation’s history. Fifteen years ago, we thought we were running out. I believe we owe this dramatic turnaround to free market competition, American ingenuity, and technological innovations that were driven, in part, through research conducted by the Department of Energy.

Our energy abundance is supporting millions of American jobs and strengthening our economy, while at the same time providing our allies with a stable and secure new supplier. U.S. energy exports, especially LNG, also have the potential to help drive down emissions, which gives our trading partners another reason to do business with us.

The shifting patterns of energy supply and use both here in the United States and around the world present both challenges and opportunities.

I bring this up, because this energy revolution represents a new economic fact of life for the United States. More communities are reliant on the supply of natural gas, for example, as more utilities use this energy for electric power. This raises another important issue for the Department, which has the core mission to ensure the reliable supply of energy to the public.

In recent years, we have worked with you to address electric critical infrastructure security, including cybersecurity, to make sure DOE has the statutory authorities to protect and respond to risks in bulk power systems. I commend your continuing focus on this mission, which you demonstrated in your formation of the Cyber Security, Energy Security, and Emergency Response office, (CESER).

One area that particularly concerns me is the nexus between natural gas pipelines and electric generating units. I'd like to understand this morning what DOE is doing to assess risks in energy systems, particularly security and cybersecurity risks that threaten the supply of energy to our electricity systems. While pipeline safety and security falls under the jurisdiction of other agencies, DOE maintains the prime responsibility for ensuring the supply of energy, so it is important to understand how you are addressing these risks.

This work on energy security also involves what happens in an emergency, what happens when there is a major disruption or a major event that impedes the supply of energy.

The CESER office addresses this, but you also have offices under other Department components that assist State energy offices. I would like to get a sense of your priorities for working with states and territories, to ensure they have the information and tools to respond in emergencies.

In the last Congress, Committee members moved several bills that would have helped to strengthen your authorities to coordinate and provide technical assistance to other federal agencies, states, utilities, to help strengthen our defenses against attacks. This is an area Energy and Commerce members will continue to press.

In Michigan, the electric power system is moving to more renewable energy. For this to work economically in the long term, technology is necessary to continue to drive down costs and to enable the reliable supply during peak electric demand. I'd like to understand how your budget aligns DOE research priorities to address the needs for cleaner electricity systems.

Finally, Mr. Secretary, there are other important priorities that will help the nation develop and deploy new clean technologies. As you know, one area of interest for the Committee concerns nuclear energy, which provides one of the best paths to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We have done a lot of work over the past several Congresses to ensure there is a framework for advanced nuclear energy, that we can more efficiently export U.S. nuclear technology, that we have a pathway for the spent fuel from our civil nuclear industry.

On this latter point, I very much appreciate your budget proposal to include some funding to restart the defense of the Yucca Mountain license before the NRC.

It seems to me, there is no quicker path to resolving the issue than getting a final license decision on the safety of Yucca Mountain. That will do more to inform public acceptance than anything else we can do.