

**Statement of Republican Leader Fred Upton**  
**Subcommittee on Energy**  
**“Oversight of DOE During the Covid-19 Pandemic”**  
**July 14, 2020**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you, Chairman Rush and welcome back Secretary Brouillette.

It is good to have you before the Subcommittee today and good to see you are thriving after your promotion to Cabinet Secretary. The nation is fortunate to have somebody like you at the helm of the Department of Energy.

When you last testified before us, you were the Deputy Secretary. That was more than two year and a half years ago, in January 2018.

At that hearing, which I chaired, the Committee was looking at DOE modernization. We examined what steps Congress could take to be sure the Department could address the national, the economic, and the energy security challenges that will be confronting the nation over the coming decades.

Given the Committee’s jurisdiction, we heard from the three main mission components of the Department—the undersecretaries of Energy, of Nuclear Security, and of Science. You led off the panel in your role as DOE’s number two and the Chief Operating Officer of the Department.

That hearing informed several ongoing legislative initiatives. For example, we have worked to strengthen the Department’s ability to address emerging hazards and cyber threats to critical infrastructure, to modernize the strategic petroleum reserve, to improve energy diplomacy, to advance nuclear and other energy policy, and to improve programs like minority workforce development.

Fast forward to today, and many of these policy issues remain critical.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the severe economic and energy sector impacts have highlighted why a well-functioning DOE is so important for the nation.

In your own testimony, Mr. Secretary, you highlight how DOE brought the capabilities of its scientific and technological resources to the Covid fight.

Data on compound screening with the [super computer at Oak Ridge](#), the use of [Argonne](#) Lab's advanced-photon-source user facility to characterize the virus, and the work with leading tech companies, illustrate the benefits of collaboration across the DOE complex and with private sector.

We heard testimony just to this point two years ago—and now see how it can work in a crisis.

Other missions of the Department have been put to the test.

The crisis in the energy sector, with economic shut down and the Russia-Saudi price war challenged DOE's strategic energy responsibilities and American energy leadership in new ways. I doubt anyone imagined forty years ago that our strategic petroleum reserve might be useful to just to take on supply, rather than disperse it in a crisis.

We may have to consider new strategic approaches to protect our energy security. Clearly, the pandemic exposed the security and strategic risks from ceding leadership on oil and gas and reminded us of the important role American energy resources and technology serves our national and strategic interests.

Several Republican members on this panel are working on [legislative reforms](#) to help modernize energy infrastructure and increase American energy leadership. This involves policies to strengthen our energy security, to promote and deploy cleaner energy, and modernizing regulatory requirements to ensure DOE and private innovation advances can be put into action.

The recent crises revealed to more Americans the strategic threats of China, Russia and other adversaries to our long-term economic and energy security. And this underscores the work we must do to make sure DOE has all the tools and authorities necessary to safeguard and respond to threats to our critical electric infrastructure, and the delivery and supply of energy.

The President's recent bulk power system [Executive Order](#) underscores these risks, and DOE is at the center of responding to them.

The increasingly complex interconnections of our modern energy systems—from pipelines to power plants--present growing risks to our grid. Getting ahead of this requires Secretarial leadership and coordinated attention across the agency's many

programs and operations. We should discuss what more is needed to advance your mission on this front today.

Finally, growing nuclear weapons threats and the tens of billions of dollars needed to maintain the nuclear deterrent underscore the urgency for creating efficient, effective, and durable governance and management of DOE's nuclear security missions.

There are many topics to cover, Mr. Secretary. Your experience as COO and now Secretary will help us identify how to address the challenges, I am sure.

Yield back.