

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

As Prepared for Delivery

Welcome Secretary Brouillette. It is good to have you back before the Committee. And I must say: You have provided strong leadership at the Department during a very critical time for the nation.

Over your first seven months on the job, the country has been fighting a global pandemic and reeling from an economic shutdown and massive job destruction. The unprecedented drop in oil prices has devastated the American oil and gas industry and cost thousands of America jobs. And the Department of Energy (DOE) has been right in the action helping the nation to respond.

This work is on top of the other important responsibilities of the Department. These range from executing on the nation’s nuclear deterrent mission to protecting our critical energy infrastructure, supporting a robust R&D program, keeping the nation’s lab facilities and capabilities up to date, and cleaning up defense sites, such as Hanford.

Most people do not appreciate all the responsibilities of DOE. It is a national security agency and an energy security agency—having designed and produced every nuclear warhead in the U.S. arsenal, powering our nuclear navy and serving critical roles in nonproliferation, international nuclear security, and other energy security missions.

DOE is a world-class science, engineering, and technology agency. It is an environmental engineering and cleanup agency. All of this is interconnected across a complex of national labs, production sites, and facilities, involving a contractor workforce approaching 100,000 people.

Managing this enterprise is a tough, complicated job. But the upshot is the tremendous benefits for the nation—for security, for science and innovation, and for keeping America in the lead across the energy landscape.

The key ingredient for success here is the innovative science and engineering capabilities fostered through a cohesive DOE enterprise—and the multi-disciplinary teamwork that emerges from that. This synergy among the weapons labs, the science labs, and the energy and environment labs are critical for success. Think about the supercomputing and big data capabilities of the agency. The computational science and advancing computing architecture created by

DOE's science and weapons programs is essential for modeling the nuclear weapons stockpile. But the cross-mission benefits of this are clear. Look at the use of Oak Ridge's Summit computer to screen compounds for a COVID-19 vaccine development.

National security and materials science programs at Pacific Northwest National Lab, near my district, have translated into technologies for scanning at airports, for cyber security protections, and even advanced batteries.

And this works both ways. The advances in nuclear fuels and technology at the Idaho National Lab attracts the expertise and informs the knowledge base for navy nuclear.

You can extend this to other important missions. DOE's work on advanced nuclear, coupled with our work to ensure efficient NRC licensing, provides the foundation for expanding the peaceful use of atomic energy.

This is the cornerstone of the nation's nuclear policy, a hallmark of civilian control of the nuclear enterprise, and an important tool not only for national security but a key solution to exporting cleaner energy around the world.

Our duty on this Committee and in Congress is to make sure the Secretary has the tools and authorities he needs to execute the Department's missions. Our goal is to maximize the benefits of the DOE enterprise for the nation. I look forward to exploring what more we can do today.