

Written Testimony of Secretary Dan Brouillette
U.S. Department of Energy
Before the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy
Tuesday, July 14, 2020

Chairman Rush, Ranking Member Upton, and Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you to discuss the Department of Energy's (DOE's) response to COVID-19.

Chairman Rush, I'd also like to thank your team for the warm welcome at our Artificial Intelligence Event on the South Side of Chicago last fall.

Our National Labs and their world-class scientific user facilities have engaged heavily in the fight against COVID-19.

Seven of our National Labs – Argonne, Berkeley, Idaho, Lawrence Livermore, Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Sandia – are partners in the COVID-19 High Performance Computing Consortium, which the President announced in March.

Led by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and with DOE and IBM as co-chairs, this effort has brought together top technology companies with leading universities and science agencies to use our massive computing capabilities in conducting scientific research on the virus.

We have also established a National Virtual Biotechnology Laboratory, which is using the full range of our facilities, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, x-ray and neutron sources, and advanced manufacturing in the effort against COVID-19.

And our Office of Technology Transitions has set up a portal on its Lab Partnering Service, which will enable America's innovators to easily access essential resources, and connect and partner with experts at our National Labs.

To give just a couple of examples of our results, scientists have used Argonne Lab's Advanced Photon Source to characterize [more than a dozen proteins](#) – potential targets for medicines and countermeasures – from COVID-19, including one that allows it to [hide from the immune system](#), and, working with Oak Ridge National Lab, another protein that enables it to [reproduce](#).

Researchers at Oak Ridge have used [Summit](#), one of the world's fastest supercomputers, to screen more than 8,000 drug compounds for 77 that have potential for use in the fight. Oak Ridge is also using its advanced manufacturing expertise and capabilities to help U.S. industry mass-produce healthcare supplies such as masks and face shields in record time.

Contributing to the National Virtual Biotechnology Laboratory Advanced Manufacturing Team led by Oak Ridge, the National Energy Technology Laboratory is also using its advanced manufacturing expertise and capabilities to develop a low-cost N95 respirator that can be cleaned and reused.

Scientists are also using the facilities at [Berkeley Lab](#) to identify neutralizing antibodies that could be used as preventative treatments or post-exposure therapies.

All these efforts are intended to not only aid our response, but also energize our recovery.

In this, while we have further to go, I believe we are succeeding.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to challenges beyond battling the virus, including unprecedented oversupply in the global oil market and substantial financial pressure on the energy industry.

In March, we faced a wave of oversupply due to decisions made by key oil-producing nations like Russia and Saudi Arabia following the collapse of OPEC-Plus negotiations. At the same time, we faced a nearly catastrophic decline in demand due to the response to COVID-19.

The President facilitated an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Russia – the co-chairs of OPEC-Plus – on terms favorable to our country.

As the largest energy producer and consumer in the world, we were able to engage other nations from a position of strength and authority, and the agreement that followed brought stability to energy markets and helped protect America's energy producers.

Following through on President Trump's direction, we opened the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to store excess oil from U.S. producers. And I am pleased to report that crude oil deliveries of 21.3 million barrels to the SPR have been completed, a positive signal for the crude oil markets.

Acting on President Trump's orders to purchase crude oil and deliver a return for the American taxpayer, DOE purchased 126,000 barrels of crude from an energy trading company working with small and midsize U.S. producers. Deliveries for this sale were completed last week. We also signed an SPR lease agreement with Australia – our first such agreement with an ally – and have 1.5 million barrels of oil for them in our reserves.

Through such efforts, we're continuing to help the 11 million people supported by the U.S. oil and natural gas industry. We are working with our federal partners to support the entire energy industry because this Administration is truly committed to an American energy approach, which includes wind, solar, hydro, nuclear, coal, oil, and natural gas.

During this crisis, we also worked with our Nation's governors and public and private sector partners to ensure that the lights remained on and our critical energy infrastructure was fully operational. As the Federal point of coordination with the energy industry during emergencies, DOE through the Emergency Support Function #12, assisted industry with access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing kits.

We also ensured the inclusion of energy sector workers in the Department of Homeland Security's *Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce*, which promoted the ability of such workers to continue work during periods of community restriction, access management, social distancing, or closure orders and directives. Similarly, the Department's Power Marketing Administrations engaged in planning processes to sequester control center personnel on site in order to ensure their continuity of operations, if needed.

As we return to full operations, we are renewing our efforts in the energy, science, and security work the Department does so well, while refocusing on important new priorities, such as protecting our supply chains and bulk power system.

We know that the bulk power system – the backbone of the Nation's electric grid – is coming under increasing threat from foreign adversaries.

In response, on May 1st, President Trump signed an Executive Order to increase the security of the Bulk Power System, and my team and I will continue to work with other federal departments and industry partners to eliminate vulnerabilities and develop policies to ensure its security and resilience for years to come.

That's my hope today, to work with each of you to make our nation safer and stronger, more prosperous, and more filled with promise than ever before. So thank you again and I look forward to answering your questions.