

Chairman Brett Guthrie
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Energy
“The Fiscal Year 2026 Department of Energy Budget”
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As prepared for delivery

Welcome to the Energy and Commerce Committee, Secretary Wright. It is good to have you before the Committee.

Many people may not fully appreciate the functions the Department performs in the federal government—and your responsibilities as Energy Secretary.

You oversee a national security agency and an energy security agency.

DOE has designed and produced every nuclear warhead in the U.S. arsenal. It powers the nuclear navy.

It plays 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.

It is an energy emergency support agency and produces essential energy information for our energy industry and the public, as well as employing the fastest computers in the world.

Its work is performed through a nation-spanning complex of national labs, production sites, and facilities, and involves the largest contractor workforce outside of the Department of Defense.

Ensuring this agency operates efficiently can be a challenge, as the Committee’s own oversight over the years has demonstrated.

That said, *successful* management of DOE’s missions and a focus on its core missions means America will be secure and stay ahead of our adversaries.

You are taking charge of DOE at a critical time for the nation.

Right now, we are fighting to achieve AI dominance. It is a technological race that we cannot afford to lose to China.

The threat of China succeeding at our expense equals, if not surpasses, the threats we faced almost 90 years ago in the race to harness atomic energy, which America fortunately won.

The success of the Manhattan Project—a project that is in DOE’s DNA—safeguarded our nation’s security for two generations.

We are confronting a similarly treacherous time today.

Over the past four years our adversaries have been emboldened, China in particular.

Here at home, our nation confronts tremendous new demand for energy and a burning need to revitalize our energy sector.

We need energy and more of it. We need to build out the types of energy that we can rely on to power our technological needs, to support our allies, to build our economy.

Against this backdrop, understanding how you plan to address the urgency of the moment is critical.

Recent actions by the Administration to supercharge the drive to restore our nuclear energy leadership—including at DOE— represent the kind of positive action this nation needs.

What will matter is how you execute these policies.

So, it is important to understand how you plan to manage the agency and align its budget to effectively meet your priorities and responsibilities—and measure results.

Every new administration takes steps to align DOE's structure to meet its priorities. President Trump did it in his first term. President Obama did it— twice.

We should give you the flexibility to have the organization you need to be effective, and to allow you to find efficiencies in agency management.

We should not lose sight of the reality that the Department today operates with about 35,000 more contractors and employees than it did five years ago. Most of that increase is from the past four years.

The agency used to put out detailed annual performance reports, but the last Administration did not produce those reports, limiting accountability for measuring the results of its work.

Restoring accountability on that front would be welcome. And there certainly is room to be more efficient and effective across the agency and the enterprise, for the sake of taxpayer stewardship.

Ultimately, what matters is aligning DOE to deliver the nuclear and energy security results that are most essential for the nation and to support the engineering and science that will help sustain a prosperous future.

I look forward to the discussion and yield back.