COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement by Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the Department of Energy for Fiscal Year 2019

Chairman Smith: Today we welcome Secretary of Energy Rick Perry to testify about the Department of Energy's (DOE) fiscal year 2019 budget request and priorities.

Before he joined the administration in 2017, Secretary Perry served as the 47th Governor of Texas and under his direction, the state of Texas became a national leader in energy innovation and economic growth.

DOE is the leading federal sponsor of research in the physical sciences and a world leader in technological development and early stage scientific research.

The department funds research across the scientific disciplines and is responsible for groundbreaking discoveries in computing, manufacturing and medicine.

The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee has jurisdiction over $10 billion in spending at DOE—approximately one third of its overall budget—including all civilian research, development, demonstration and commercial application programs and the 17 DOE National Laboratories.

Our discussion with the secretary this morning will focus on programs within this broad jurisdiction, particularly the funding priorities in the president's fiscal year 2019 budget for the department.

This hearing also provides committee members with the opportunity to discuss the fiscal year 2018 enacted budget, which was signed into law earlier this year.

The budget proposes only $75 million in U.S. contributions to the ITER project, less than what is required to maintain U.S. participation in this world-leading international research collaboration.

The potential benefits from fusion research are incalculable, and commercial fusion will revolutionize the energy market and significantly reduce global emissions when it is developed.

However, the administration has proposed increased investments in the research infrastructure that will be necessary to maintain America's leadership in science.

For example, the budget request includes an increase in funding for the Advanced Scientific Computing Research (ASCR) program.

Within ASCR, a large portion of the requested fiscal year 2019 funding is designated for a DOE Exascale Computing Initiative.

Developing an exascale system is critical to enabling scientific discovery, strengthening national security and promoting U.S. industrial competitiveness. As of November 2017, the United States hosts only four of the top ten fastest supercomputers in the world, none of which are in the top three.

As other countries race to develop exascale systems of their own, DOE investment in exascale computing is essential to reestablish U.S. leadership in this field.

DOE also must invest in next generation research infrastructure at its world-renowned national laboratories.

In February, the House passed three committee bills that prioritize new investments and upgrades for the national labs. This includes funding for the Versatile Neutron Source, a fast test reactor that is critical for the development of advanced nuclear reactors.

The president's fiscal year 2019 budget includes funding for six of the eight facilities and upgrades included in this legislation.

While the funding levels do not reach the amounts authorized in the committee's legislation for fiscal year 2019, prioritizing these DOE user facilities in the budget request is an important first step for funding next generation science.

The president's request includes increased reliance on the private sector to drive commercialization of energy technologies. This ensures the department will focus limited research funds on the early-stage research that the private sector cannot perform.

We look forward to hearing from Secretary Perry today about how he plans to execute DOE's mission objectives in the upcoming fiscal year and beyond. Maintaining U.S. leadership in science will require a shared commitment to prioritize DOE research and support the next generation of energy technology.

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