



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Full Committee Markup of Committee Print to Comply with the Reconciliation Directive Included in Section 2002 of the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, S. Con. Res. 14.

September 9, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Johnson. I'm disappointed that we're here for today's mark-up because of poor, politically driven decisions by Democratic leadership.

Forcing through \$3.5 trillion in partisan reconciliation spending is nothing short of reckless and irresponsible. This exercise isn't about making smart policy decisions to better serve the American people. It's about using gimmicks to dramatically increase the size and scope of the federal government using only the slimmest of possible voting margins. To create a false sense of urgency, House Democratic leadership is pressing for quick action on this. Why do that, when we have real deadlines facing us and a Congressional responsibility to act?

Government funding expires in three weeks and without an agreement we could be facing a government shutdown. We're also in danger of breaching our debt ceiling and defaulting on our legal obligations. Meanwhile, \$1 trillion in COVID relief funds is sitting unspent and Americans are paying for Washington's actions with higher prices at the gas pump, at the grocery store, and just about everywhere else. Energy costs alone have increased by 24% since last summer.

As inflation rises, Americans have to stretch every dollar further and further. But instead of addressing this very real problem, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Senator Sanders are just pushing for more government spending. The Sanders budget plan directs the Science Committee to spend \$45.5 billion in the Committee's jurisdiction. There are some priorities in this bill that I support—priorities which we worked on together over the past few years. But this isn't the right way to fund those priorities.

These aren't thoughtful investments designed to significantly improve American research and development. We're throwing money at agencies with almost no direction on how it is to be spent. We're abdicating our responsibilities as legislators and handing over our decisions to unelected bureaucrats.

And this isn't free money. It comes with a cost that our children and grandchildren will have to pay. We're borrowing from their future and making it harder for them to invest in the challenges they'll face. Worse, we're doing so recklessly. What happens in five years when this massive infusion of cash dries up? It creates a funding cliff that prevents us from making sustainable and strategic investments. That doesn't just impact our research itself—when we hit the funding cliff, scientists and researchers will find themselves out of work, further damaging our STEM pipeline.

Aside from the reckless nature of this spending, I have some significant concerns with the way the money is allocated within this legislation. At a time when energy costs are skyrocketing, it's troubling that this bill rejects an all-of-the-above approach to energy research and instead focuses almost entirely on renewables. Families are paying more to heat and cool their homes, and businesses are paying more to manufacture and distribute their goods. That makes it very difficult for the United States to stay globally competitive.

Why, then, does this bill ignore research into affordable, clean, and reliable fuel sources like natural gas and nuclear energy? We will not be able to address climate change unless we take a comprehensive approach to developing new energy technologies. Anything short of that is just political virtue signaling.

I'm also concerned that within these tens of billions of dollars, no money was allocated for bipartisan Committee priorities like human space exploration and restarting research halted by COVID. It's a sign of how disordered this bill is.

I'm especially disappointed because I believe this bill undercuts the important work we've done to develop legislation to improve American research and development. We've passed three overwhelmingly bipartisan bills – the National Science Foundation for the Future Act, the DOE Science for the Future Act, and the NIST for the future Act – which invest a total of \$135 billion over 5 years across our most critical federal research agencies.

I'm proud of our work on those bills and I appreciate all that Chairwoman Johnson and my friends across the aisle did to develop them. That's why it's so troubling that this reconciliation package undermines our bipartisan efforts. Provisions in this package will make it harder to negotiate the House competitiveness package with the Senate. We'll throw away our deliberate, strategic approach in favor of this one-time spending spree.

The legislation before us today isn't about funding science – if it were, we would be doing so through smart policies. This is about spending just for the sake of spending. It's bad policy, and, while I hope we can pass some amendments to improve it, I'm opposed to passing it through this Committee.

Thank you.