



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the Department of Energy for Fiscal Year 2025

June 26, 2024

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Lucas, for holding this important hearing today. And thank you to Deputy Secretary Turk for being here. As you may know, this Committee played a leading role in shaping our nation's energy policy through the last several Congresses, including major contributions to the CHIPS and Science Act, the Energy Act of 2020, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

As we examine DOE's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2025 – and focus on the implementation of each of these landmark bills – an area that I am particularly focused on is fusion energy, as the Members of this Committee know well by now. The need to significantly improve support for our U.S. fusion research enterprise is actually one of the major reasons that I first ran for Congress in 1994, and one of the top reasons that I decided to seek the Ranking Member position of this Committee.

I am excited about the real breakthroughs we've seen in fusion over the last 2 years alone, including the monumental achievement of ignition at the National Ignition Facility in late 2022 – which was followed by even more progress from NIF over the past year.

I'm also encouraged by the rapid growth we are now seeing in the private sector for fusion, and the major technical achievements that they are now bringing to our overall national effort.

For example, in January I had the opportunity to visit the fusion companies Zap Energy and Helion, and I was impressed with the inventiveness and the breadth of the work they are now undertaking to bring fusion to the grid as quickly as possible.

Last year I was especially encouraged that this progress was recognized in the Administration's Budget Request for 2024, which closely tracked the bipartisan levels and activities authorized in the CHIPS and Science Act. It also followed the priorities identified by the fusion community itself in the most recent Long Range Plan produced by the Fusion Energy Sciences Advisory Committee.

And then, despite the best efforts of me and many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I was deeply disappointed that Congress's appropriations process failed to match or frankly come anywhere close to this request. And I am further disappointed that DOE's budget proposal for fusion in 2025 appears to be a step backward.

Of particular note, the fusion community's Long Range Plan recommended substantially increasing support for materials and fusion nuclear science R&D and for public-private partnerships under all fusion budget scenarios, including the flat and modest growth scenarios that we have recently been operating under.

Yet, while the Department's latest budget request does propose a small increase of about 7% for the overall program, support for materials and fusion nuclear science would be close to the same as 2024, and your flagship public-private partnership program for fusion, called the milestone program, would be cut by 25%.

I look forward to discussing this apparent discrepancy with you further, and to working closely with you to get these programs on much stronger footing. At this critical juncture for the budding U.S. fusion industry, we need to make sure we are prioritizing our Federal investments in a smarter way to best ensure success.

Recent headwinds aside, we still have a long way to go before a final budget gets to the President's desk, and I only see bipartisan support for this enterprise growing in the months and years to come. So, I am doing everything in my power to make sure that going forward, our annual federal funding reflects the tremendous progress and the immense promise of fusion energy, and I invite everyone here to join me in this effort.

Thank you and I yield back.