



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

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Markup:

H.R. 8748, Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2026
H.R. 8790, Next-Generation Geothermal Research and Development Act
H.R. 7129, Water Power Research and Development Reauthorization Act

May 20, 2026

Good morning. Chairman Babin, thank you for holding today's markup. I would like to commend the Chairman for his continued commitment to bipartisanship. I enthusiastically support all three bills before us today. I am also happy to see the first Democratic Member led bill on the docket since June of last year. However, I remain concerned about how few Democratic Member led bills have been brought up before the Committee when we are now nearly three-quarters of the way through the 119th Congress. This is only the fourth Democratic Member led bill we are considering this Congress. We have not enjoyed the same degree of reciprocity that has been the norm in this Committee. Also concerning for me is how many Democratic proposals have languished without feedback or cosponsors when Democratic staff and members have worked diligently and collaboratively all Congress to get to good, bipartisan agreement on most of the proposals that Republican members have sent our way for consideration. By my staff's estimate, at least 7 draft bills have languished for a month or longer, some of them all Congress, including my own bills. Many other bipartisan bills have been introduced but not scheduled for markup. I hope you can understand our frustration. With that said, I will move on to the bills before us now.

The first bill up is the Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2026, sponsored by Representatives Fong and Sykes. This bill authorizes surface transportation research, development, and demonstration programs at the Department of Transportation and represents the Science Committee's contribution to the larger surface transportation reauthorization being

led by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Specifically, the bill makes important updates to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, University Transportation Centers, the technology and innovation deployment program, and the cooperative rail research program. I also want to note that this bill will direct research into headlight brightness, an issue I think we can all agree is worth looking into. There are a number of thoughtful and intelligent amendments on the roster that I plan to support. Before I move on, I would like to direct a special thanks to a former tech fellow with the Democratic staff, Kevin Li, who put a lot of time and effort into this bill.

The next bill on the roster is an expansion of one we originally considered last Congress; it is the Next-Generation Geothermal Research & Development Act sponsored by Representatives Harrigan and Salinas. The purpose of this bill is to unlock geothermal energy resources from geographic restraints and supercharge its potential output. Advances in enhanced geothermal, closed-loop geothermal, and geothermal systems operating in supercritical conditions could result in geothermal technologies being deployable virtually anywhere in the United States - producing an estimated 90 gigawatts of electricity. As compared with the current 16 gigawatts worldwide, the possibilities are remarkable and the opportunity is undeniable. The United States is facing twin crises of affordability and climate change; the proliferation of carbon-free geothermal energy could be employed to ameliorate the situation, instead of blindly exacerbating it which seems to be the prerogative of the current Administration. I thank Representatives Harrigan and Salinas for their collaborative effort on this important bill.

Our last bill is the Water Power Research and Development Reauthorization Act, sponsored by Representatives Bonamici and Begich. Hydropower is one of the oldest forms of renewable energy and it still accounts for approximately 27% of total U.S. renewable electricity generation. In addition to providing carbon-free electricity, hydropower plays a critical role in providing low-cost energy, maintaining grid reliability, and supporting energy storage. However, much of the nation's hydropower infrastructure is aging, and emerging technologies such as marine energy and pumped storage remain underdeveloped despite their significant potential to strengthen energy resilience and reliability. This bill provides updated guidance for DOE's research, development, demonstration, and commercialization programs in hydropower, marine

energy, and pumped storage technologies. I want to thank the sponsors for their leadership on this important bill.

With that I thank the Chairman, and I yield back.