



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Full Committee Markup of H.R. 8748, H.R. 8790, and H.R. 7129
May 20, 2026

Good morning, and thank you all for being here for today's markup.

This morning, the Committee will consider three pieces of legislation focused on advancing American research, innovation, infrastructure, and energy capabilities critical to our nation's future.

First, we will consider the Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2026. This legislation reauthorizes and modernizes Department of Transportation research and technology programs through fiscal year 2031.

The bill addresses a broad range of transportation research priorities, including transportation statistics modernization, university transportation research programs, rail safety research, reclaimed asphalt materials, and emerging roadway safety issues such as high-intensity LED headlamps. It also works to improve coordination of transportation data and research activities across the Department to help ensure more efficient and effective use of federal resources.

Reliable transportation systems are essential to economic growth, public safety, and the movement of people and goods across the country. Continued investment in research and development helps ensure the United States remains prepared to meet the transportation challenges of the future.

Next, the Committee will consider the Next-Generation Geothermal Research and Development Act. This bill builds on the Department of Energy's existing geothermal research efforts to support next-generation geothermal technologies, including enhanced geothermal systems, closed-loop geothermal systems, and supercritical geothermal energy.

Geothermal energy has the potential to provide reliable, American-made baseload power in regions of the country where traditional geothermal development was once thought impossible. Advancements in drilling, subsurface mapping, and related research are creating new opportunities to expand this energy source while reinforcing domestic energy production and supporting critical mineral development.

This legislation also improves coordination of geothermal research and data activities across the federal government, supports commercialization efforts, and promotes collaboration between the Department of Energy, national laboratories, universities, and the private sector.

Finally, we will consider the Water Power Research and Development Reauthorization Act. This legislation reauthorizes research and development activities related to hydropower and marine energy technologies.

The bill includes updates related to workforce development, advanced manufacturing, grid resilience, marine energy research, and hydropower operations. It also seeks to improve coordination between federal agencies, universities, industry, and regional research centers to support continued innovation in water power technologies.

Taken together, these bills reflect the broad scope of this Committee's jurisdiction and our responsibility to support scientific research and technological advancement that strengthen America's economy, infrastructure, energy systems, and long-term competitiveness.

I appreciate the bipartisan work that has gone into developing these measures, and I welcome thoughtful amendments as we work to ensure each bill is as strong and effective as possible.