

Representative Eric Swalwell  
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Energy  
Hearing: “American Energy Outlook: Technology, Market, and  
Policy Drivers”  
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Opening Statement

Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate you holding this hearing today, and I look forward to working with you on energy issues on the subcommittee.

I also would like to thank our panel for appearing today. I look forward to your testimony.

Appropriately, this hearing will serve as a stage-setter, an opportunity to get a snapshot of the current energy landscape in the U.S. and abroad.

Today we will hear more about the shifting dynamics in the energy marketplace. Far from being stagnant and hopeless, we now are seeing an unprecedented pace of change that was unpredictable even a few years ago. For instance, renewables are penetrating at a remarkable rate, with growth in wind energy alone outpacing natural gas in 2012.

Our responsibility is to ensure that this country is prepared for whatever changes the markets may experience. Overreliance on a limited range of technologies and finite resources is unreasonable. We know that the U.S. uses 20 percent of the world’s oil but has only two percent of world’s oil reserves. Our strength will lay in our ability to transition to new, cleaner, more sustainable resources. We cannot drill our way to energy security and a thriving economy – we need to unleash the creativity of our scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs to unlock our energy potential.

We must be competitive and not let ourselves get left behind. As Washington bickers, our competitors are pulling out all of the stops to capitalize on the booming clean energy economy. It is time for us to get serious about creating a coherent green energy policy to enable us to compete globally. We should be leading the world in the search for better, safer, more affordable energy.

The Pew Charitable Trusts estimates that, between now and 2018, annual revenue from clean energy installations will grow by eight percent, globally, and by 14 percent in the U.S. and this will amount to almost two trillion dollars in cumulative revenues in that timeframe. These profits, if we can make sure they are generated here in the U.S., mean good, middle-class,

American jobs.

Finally, we must recognize the impact that our energy choices have on public health and the global environment, now and far into the future. Addressing climate change is about global security, the ecosystems that feed us, our public health and safety, and our future economic well-being.

From the outset I will say that I believe there is no one-size-fits-all prescription or standardized test for the appropriate role of government in securing our energy future. In a field as complex as energy, we must be flexible and efficient when deploying taxpayer resources and rely on a mix of scientific expertise, market forces, and common sense to identify gaps and inform our policy decisions.

First and foremost, we should engage our world-class scientific enterprise - from universities to national labs – to overcome fundamental scientific and technical challenges. Two national labs in particular, Lawrence Livermore and Sandia, located in my congressional district, are hard at work taking on the energy challenges of the future. Federal programs have a role to play in giving innovators, investors, and companies a space to collaborate. We should do more to replicate public-private partnerships like i-GATE (Innovation for Green Advanced Transportation Excellence) that harness the creativity of our best and brightest in science and business.

We also should leverage equitable and innovative financing mechanisms where the market is not well-structured to take on the often high technical and financial risks. Finally, when there is no tool to match the problem, we should have the courage to reinvent the way government does business. Programs like Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) and the Department of Energy's Hubs showed us it can be done.

With scientific research nothing is guaranteed, and so we need to be willing to take risks. I come from the Bay Area, which includes Silicon Valley, where risk-taking is critical to the region's economy. Taking risks means sometimes you will not succeed, but scientific progress has never been a straight line. Only by taking risks and charging forward can we ever hope to reach goals which today may seem out of reach.

The big energy challenges we face require big lead times to solve. We thus cannot let bureaucratic inertia and partisan politics delay or get in the way of us making investments that encourage research, innovation, and competition. If the U.S. is to be the world leader in all aspects of energy, we must be willing to work together, compromise, and embrace innovative ideas.

Again, I want to thank Chairman Lummis for holding this hearing. I look forward to an engaging discussion of the critical energy issues facing our country. With that, I yield back the balance of my time.