COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
Hearing on Fusion Energy: The World's Most Complex Energy Project

Chairman Smith: Today the Energy Subcommittee will hear from a panel of experts with collectively over a century of experience in science and engineering.

We look forward to their testimony on the prospects of nuclear fusion as a future energy source. Fusion energy research attempts to achieve an invaluable reward for humankind – a sustainable, renewable, zero-emissions energy source. It also represents one the greatest scientific challenges in history.

This scientific undertaking of creating the power source of a star on earth will require persistence and commitment. The next step towards achieving this goal is the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).

The Obama Administration has chosen to underfund ITER in its fiscal year 2015 request. Instead of adequately supporting ITER, which could eventually lead to global energy security, the Administration's budget request cuts this project by $50 million. The Administration instead prioritizes late stage, unreliable renewable energy, such as wind and solar.

Fusion energy is in the early stages of research. But experts predict that it could someday provide a solution to the challenges of climate change. This is because fusion energy has the potential to power the world for millions of years, is reliable, and yields zero carbon emissions. Still, the Administration refuses to adequately support this science.

Depriving the U.S. ITER program of the funds it needs to accomplish its goals is not good policy. To maintain our competitive advantage, we must continue to support fundamental basic research that encourages the creation and design of next generation technologies.

Fusion energy is the sort of high-risk, high-reward research that will benefit future generations if we are bold enough to pursue it.