

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas at Energy Subcommittee Hearing on ARPA-E

Feb 26, 2019

Opening Statement

Thank you, Chairman Lamb. I would like to congratulate you on your new position as Chairman of the Energy Subcommittee and thank you for holding this hearing today.

ARPA-E was created to help the U.S. energy sector maintain its competitive edge in developing advanced energy solutions. The program was established to jumpstart technologies that were too early-stage to attract private sector investment but could have a significant impact on the energy market.

In order to accomplish this goal, ARPA-E was given a unique management structure, with the flexibility to start and stop research projects based on performance. Program managers have expedited hiring and firing authority to make sure ARPA-E staff could adequately select and support projects.

Today, ARPA-E supports fundamental research over a wide range of cutting-edge energy technology areas, including bioenergy, battery technology development, and advanced nuclear.

But despite some fascinating areas of research, ARPA-E is not without controversy. For example, many of ARPA-E's programs have significant overlap with the program goals of DOE's applied energy research programs. We'll hear testimony today supporting big increases in spending for ARPA-E. But with \$6 billion in annual spending already devoted to applied research elsewhere in DOE, ARPA-E – and any increased spending for it – is redundant if it's not refocused on more innovative research.

That brings us to the second problem. We've heard concerns over the years that ARPA-E isn't meeting its intended goal – to fund the kind of technologies that are so pioneering they would never attract private sector investment – but was instead providing funding to big companies with access to market capital, or funding research that was already succeeding in the private sector.

ARPA-E is a program that can and has had tremendous impact on the development of new energy technologies – but we must address these concerns and refocus the agency on funding the most innovative research. That's why last Congress I introduced a bill to reform ARPA-E, which passed the House with bipartisan support.

This legislation expanded the mission of ARPA-E to include the full DOE mission and empowered the agency to promote science and technology driven solutions to DOE's broader goals.

My bill also included important direction to prevent the duplication of research across DOE and ensure that limited taxpayer dollars are spent on the most transformative technologies, not in competition with the private sector.

I hope that we can work together to include these reforms in any reauthorization of ARPA-E this Congress.

It is our job to be good stewards of taxpayer resources. With the right mission goals and common-sense conservative management, I believe ARPA-E's innovative approach can build on the basic science and early-stage research at the Department. We can help fast track new technologies that will grow our economy, stabilize our environment, and maintain U.S. leadership in science and technology around the world.

I thank our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to a productive discussion this morning.