



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Energy Subcommittee Ranking Member Randy Weber

Energy Subcommittee Hearing

Water and Geothermal Power: Unearthing the Next Wave of Energy Innovation

November 14, 2019

Thank you, Chairman Lamb for holding today's subcommittee hearing. I'm looking forward to hearing from our witnesses about the state of water and geothermal power technologies in the U.S., and about the Department of Energy's innovative clean energy R&D activities in these areas.

Water and geothermal power R&D is funded through the Department's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE).

As we discuss yet another applied energy program this afternoon, it's important to remind ourselves that EERE is by far the Department of Energy's largest applied research program. At almost \$2.4 billion in annual funding, EERE receives more funding than the R&D budgets for research in fossil energy, nuclear energy, electricity, and cybersecurity combined.

Since DOE's Water Power Technologies Office (WPTO) and Geothermal Technologies Office (GTO) are both housed under this very well-funded program, I'm again surprised to see my colleagues on the other side of the aisle propose legislation to grow these offices even more, without proposing funding offsets.

As written, the Water Power Research and Development Act would increase spending on EERE's Water Power Technologies activities by nearly 60 percent by fiscal year 2024.

Similarly, the Geothermal Energy Research and Development Act would increase annual spending on EERE's Geothermal Technologies activities to \$150 million – nearly 70 percent higher than the House-passed 2020 Appropriations level. It would also provide \$150 million for this program each year through 2024.

Once again, I want to be clear – I'm supportive of DOE funding for innovative research in advanced renewable energy sources.

And I believe that these technologies play a vital role in our country's path forward to a clean energy future.

This is why I'm also supportive of basic research – the kind that the energy industry cannot conduct – like research in advanced computing, machine learning and the development of new materials. This discovery science lays the foundation for the next technology breakthrough and it can only be supported by the Federal government.

This requires sustained Federal investment in the construction of critical research facilities and infrastructure across the country, particularly at our world-leading national laboratories and universities.

By providing American researchers with the tools to perform cutting edge research, we can accelerate the development of a diversity of advanced energy technologies.

These are the kinds of investments we see prioritized in my friend Ranking Member Lucas's bill, the Advanced Geothermal Research and Technology Act of 2019.

I'm particularly pleased to see investments in a geothermal advanced computing and data science program, and critical support for GTO's innovative experimental user facility included in this legislation.

Best of all it prioritizes these areas responsibly, without significant increases in new spending.

I'm looking forward to considering this bill and hearing about the research it would prioritize today.

So in closing – and I feel like I keep repeating myself – I hope that moving forward, we can focus on prioritizing investments in fundamental research that we all agree are necessary to develop new energy technologies.

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