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

Opening Statement of Energy Subcommittee Ranking Member Randy Weber

Energy Subcommittee Hearing

The Department of Energy's Office of Science: Exploring the Next Frontiers in Energy Research and Scientific Discovery

January 15, 2020

Thank you, Chairwoman Fletcher, for hosting this hearing, and thank you Dr. Fall for being here this afternoon. I am excited to hear about the critical work being performed at the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science.

DOE is the largest Federal sponsor of basic research in the physical sciences. This Committee's jurisdiction includes all of DOE's civilian research, including almost $13 billion in research, development, demonstration, and commercial application programs, as well as the Department's 17 national labs. This amount totals one-third of the DOE's budget.

As Ranking Member of the Energy Subcommittee I take great pride in this responsibility. And I believe that one of the most important pieces, if not the most important piece, of our portfolio is the DOE Office of Science.

That is why I am a little surprised that this Congress, this is the first hearing we have held on this agency. Especially since the Office of Science is a $7 billion dollar program that represents more than half of this Subcommittee's jurisdiction.

Instead, last year, we had many hearings on advanced renewable energy technologies from solar and wind, to sustainable transportation, geothermal and hydropower.

And while I am very supportive of these technologies, I think we can all agree that there is one key weakness they all have in common. One that industry will never address.

In order for these technologies to truly provide reliable and affordable grid-scale electricity across the United States, they will require access to next generation energy storage materials and technologies. To meet this need, strong and strategic support for basic research in materials science and computing through the Office of Science is critical.

This is just one example of the importance of this agency's work. In the past few decades, research conducted through the Office of Science has led to monumental discoveries in materials science, computing, fundamental physics, and biological sciences, and has enabled the development of innovative energy technology.

Each DOE lab has made invaluable contributions to U.S. scientific progress. And they have repeatedly demonstrated that basic science research is the most effective way to encourage innovation.

Additionally, the unique, open-access user facilities at these Office of Science labs provide our nation's researchers with the most cutting-edge tools of modern science, like advanced light sources, particle accelerators, and the two fastest supercomputers in the world. Each year, thousands of researchers from academia, other Federal agencies, and U.S. industry partners, from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses, rely on DOE facilities to perform new scientific research and develop new technologies.

Thanks to the Office of Science and its decades of excellent work, the United States is the world leader in basic science research and technological development.

But even as we speak, other countries, like China, are making significant investments in science and threatening our global leadership.

The Department's continued investment in basic and early-stage research to vital to the maintenance of our technology edge.

By investing wisely in this research, the Department can achieve its goal of scientific discovery and technological breakthroughs for future generations. DOE must also invest in the facility upgrades and basic infrastructure that attracts and retains the best scientists in the world here at home. I look forward to hearing from Dr. Fall about his plans to address these issues.

I also look forward to hearing from Dr. Fall about DOE's ongoing implementation of several key pieces of bipartisan Science Committee legislation that was signed into law last Congress – including the DOE Research and Innovation Act, and the National Quantum Initiative Act.

When basic research is the priority of federal support, everyone has the opportunity to access the fundamental knowledge that can lead to the development of future energy technologies.

I'd like to take a moment to thank my friends across the aisle for holding this hearing. I am pleased to see that we are starting off the New Year on the right foot by focusing on this key aspect of our jurisdiction. Thank you again Dr. Fall for taking the time to be here today.