



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

## **Opening Statement of Energy Subcommittee Ranking Member Randy Weber**

### **Energy Subcommittee Hearing**

*From Lab to Market: Accelerating our Progress toward Economic Recovery and  
a Clean Energy Future*

July 17, 2020

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Thank you, Chairwoman Fletcher, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today. This Committee is no stranger to the work being done at the Department of Energy's National Laboratories. Whether it's synthesizing new materials or pioneering advanced nuclear reactors, the National Labs have an established history of being at the forefront of scientific discovery. But that is just the first step.

The commercialization of technologies, including those that begin at the National Labs, face unique obstacles before widespread utilization or deployment. Those obstacles include lengthy development times, high upfront costs, and lack of desire to replace current technology. It is what we so often hear referred to as the "Valley of Death."

That is why DOE established their Office of Technology Transitions (OTT) in 2015. OTT's goal is to foster partnerships that guide innovations from the lab into the marketplace by streamlining access to information and to the National Lab's user facilities. One example of this is their development of the Lab Partnering Service (LPS), which connects investors to experts, competitive technology, world-class facilities, and partnering opportunities.

Today's hearing is a legislative one, as we review several DOE tech transfer bills. The first, a draft version of the Energizing Technology Transfer Act, authorizes a broad range of DOE's tech transfer activities including many helpful provisions for the DOE national laboratories. I agree that there exists an opportunity to improve technology transfer between DOE and private industry by enhancing coordination and cutting red tape.

We can require DOE to maximize return on R&D investment by better managing research efforts across the Department to save money, reduce waste, and prevent duplication. But I hope we don't waste this opportunity today, and on this legislation, by focusing most of our attention on the narrow field of clean energy technology. Don't get me wrong, I understand that clean energy technologies face unique challenges when it comes to the entering the

marketplace, but on an issue as important as this and on a portfolio as broad as DOE's, we cannot afford to have tunnel vision on a singular issue.

Federal tech transfer authorities like OTT can accelerate the adoption of advanced technologies over a wide range of areas. For example, recently, we've seen OTT go live with a COVID-19 portal can quickly connect experienced researchers with information about facilities that may be useful in their efforts to contribute to the fight against the pandemic.

As we evaluate how to respond to today's current public health crisis, it is clear that clean energy technologies, while important, are just one part of the bigger picture. There are so many more opportunities for innovation in this time of economic recovery. We cannot afford to limit ourselves to one option and be caught flat footed when the next challenge presents itself down the road.

I look forward to hearing from Dr. Lee Cheatham, the Director of Technology Deployment and Outreach at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory on this topic of broad DOE tech transfer applications. Dr. Cheatham will provide a unique perspective as he has hands-on experience with DOE tech transfer related to digital recording, a more resilient power grid, threat awareness and detection, and cancer treatment.

We'll also use today's hearing to review the IMPACT for Energy Act, which establishes a DOE affiliated non-profit foundation that would perform outreach to the private sector. While I believe this could be a useful tool for the National Labs to share ideas and engage with the public and increase training of new researchers, I am concerned that this bill does not include specified funds to be authorized. I hope today we can hear suggestions on just how much this effort will cost and what specific authorization levels are needed for its success.

Again, I want to thank our witnesses for taking the time to be with us today. I look forward to a productive discussion with recommendations on how to improve the legislation before us.

This is the proper legislative process and I want to applaud the Chairwoman for attempting to make this as open and bipartisan as possible. Thank you Chairwoman and I yield back the balance of my time.