



COMMITTEE ON

SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

## Opening Statement of Ranking Member Randy Weber

Energy Subcommittee Hearing – Fostering Equity in Energy Innovation

*July 16, 2021*

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Thank you, Chairman Bowman for holding this hearing and thank you to our witness panel for joining us this morning.

Today's discussion is a timely one. On the Science Committee we have clear shared goals in supporting a clean and secure energy future that is accessible to all Americans. We know that this future is near, but that an equitable transition can mean many different things to many different communities.

That's because when it comes to energy equity, the needs of at-risk communities across this great country are as diverse as the very people who make up this melting pot. There's a very real possibility that what works in the Bronx, New York – which is my friend Mr. Bowman's district – might not in work Galveston, Texas, part of my district.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to a clean energy transition. If we fail to account for everyone, we will see devastating impacts on American workers and local communities. For example, rural areas like those scattered across Texas actually represent 86 percent of persistent poverty counties in the United States.

And in those rural counties, many families' entire livelihoods are dependent on the current infrastructure and job security that come from traditional energy production. Texas is just one of six states where fossil fuel jobs account for a significant share of total rural employment. Today, those fossil fuel jobs outnumber clean energy jobs in 23 of 28 rural counties across the state.

Therefore, I think it's obvious that any plan to completely abandon our current infrastructure and energy sources would be a big mistake. That's why a key component of a successful equitable energy transition is an all-of-the-above energy strategy, with a focus on affordable and reliable energy technologies, and keeping traditional energy sources on the table while making them cleaner and more efficient. That means carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration that makes fossil fuels clean. It means keeping our nuclear fleet up and running. It also means incorporating solar, wind, and other renewables into our grid as a piece of the puzzle, instead of mandating an instant and complete transition.

On the Science Committee we know that the best way to do this is by investing in clean energy innovation. I'm proud to say this Committee has made this a priority for years. There is no problem we cannot innovate our way around.

Last Congress, we passed the Energy Act of 2020 to modernize our nation's energy policies by prioritizing research, development, and demonstration of next-generation technologies like energy storage, advanced nuclear, and carbon capture. As a result of this legislation, we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the energy and industrial sectors while increasing U.S. competitiveness in clean energy technologies. This is a win for all Americans.

This Congress, we set our sights on the Department of Energy's Office of Science to continue down this innovation pathway. The DOE Science for the Future Act provides comprehensive policy guidance and funding authorization for major research programs that will drive new discoveries in energy technologies and pave the way for the development of sustainable, affordable, and scalable clean energy solutions.

On that note, I want to congratulate Chairman Bowman, along with the Full Committee Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson and Ranking Member Frank Lucas, on successfully passing this bill on the Floor by a large bipartisan margin. I look forward to working with this group to get this bill over the finish line and signed into law.

I mention all these successes because I want my colleagues and our witnesses to know the Science Committee is doing our part to turn words into actions.

Our focus has always been, and will continue to be, policy that keeps energy affordable and reliable, especially for low-income, minority, rural, and senior citizen communities. These are the communities that suffer from a lack of access to reliable energy sources and spend proportionately higher amounts of their income on electricity costs.

Eliminating energy poverty is something we all want to achieve. But in doing so, we need to be mindful of how policies will impact the very communities we are trying to serve. I want to thank our witnesses for sharing their insights on this and I look forward to this discussion.