



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Energy Subcommittee Hearing – Fostering a New Era of Fusion Energy Research and Technology Development

November 17, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Bowman.

Today, we have an opportunity to examine the status of fusion energy research in the United States. I look forward to hearing more about how we can provide robust support for these high-priority research activities both internationally and here at home.

Fusion R&D has long enjoyed bipartisan support on the Science Committee – and for good reason. It is exactly the type of high-risk, high-reward basic research that expands our fundamental knowledge of science and technology and pushes the limits of what’s possible. Fusion energy has the potential to produce discoveries that will transform our clean energy future, keeping America energy independent and at the cutting edge of technological progress.

To realize the promise of fusion energy, we must take an all-of-the-above approach. We must support full funding for U.S. participation in ITER – the leading international research project for fusion energy – and we must make major investments in DOE national laboratories like Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and we must support productive partnerships with the rapidly growing U.S. fusion energy industry.

Last Congress, we passed the Energy Act of 2020, which includes significant authorizations of DOE’s fusion energy sciences activities, including an inertial fusion R&D program, fusion reactor system design activities, an innovation network for fusion energy, and explicit direction for U.S. participation in ITER.

Our bill, H.R. 3593, the Department of Energy Science for the Future Act, will build on the success of the Energy Act. Like that bill, the DOE Science for the Future Act is overwhelmingly bipartisan. It’s the product of years of hearings and discussions with stakeholders. The DOE Science for the Future Act is the first comprehensive authorization of the DOE Office of Science. This legislation will invest \$50 billion over 5 years, giving the Office of Science and our National Labs the resources they need to continue to excel.

This landmark legislation includes more than \$5.6 billion for Fusion Energy Sciences, extending and supplementing authorizations in the Energy Act. But it's not simply an authorization of research dollars. This legislation provides essential policy direction and strategic guidance for U.S. fusion energy R&D based on extensive stakeholder feedback and reports from the Fusion Energy Sciences Advisory Committee and the National Academies. This is a thoughtful, well-vetted, and overwhelmingly bipartisan bill, designed to significantly improve American research and development.

The House approach to competitiveness legislation has been thoughtful, deliberate, and strategic. It makes smart investments to make continuous improvements to American research and development. So as discussions are starting about incorporating competitiveness legislation in the NDAA, I believe it's critical our priorities are included.

This Congress, we've seen a lot of multi-trillion-dollar spending proposals come and go, and we've heard a lot about so-called "opportunities" to cut corners and heavily compromise on our shared priorities. The best path forward for fusion energy legislation is the DOE Science for the Future Act. We can't afford to accept the Senate's half-baked proposal, and we can't afford to accept a social spending bill with a fraction of our fusion investments, stripped of policy direction and long-term planning.

I appreciate Chairwoman Johnson's and Chairman Bowman's commitment to our shared goal of strengthening our investment in fusion energy and I look forward to working together to get this bill signed into law.

I want to thank our witnesses for their testimony today, and for outlining their plans to make fusion energy a reality for the next generation. I look forward to a productive discussion. Thank you, Chairman Bowman, I yield back the balance of my time.