



COMMITTEE ON

**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

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

Energy Subcommittee Hearing – “H2Success: Research and Development to Advance a Clean Hydrogen Future

*For the Record – February 17, 2022*

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Thank you, Chairman Bowman.

When it comes to the future of clean energy, hydrogen is one of the most exciting and widely discussed topics. And for good reason: it is clean, abundantly available, adaptable to multiple industries, and versatile for use with other fuel sources and current infrastructure. That is why we are currently seeing unprecedented levels of investment and interest in hydrogen energy production.

The Department of Energy carries out hydrogen R&D activities primarily through its Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technologies Office. As a part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, DOE has been directed to spend approximately \$9.5 billion for the advancement of hydrogen as an energy source.

The vast majority of that pot of money, \$8 billion, is reserved for the establishment of at least four regional hydrogen hubs, which I know will be a major topic of discussion this morning. While I didn't support the infrastructure bill because of the Trillions of dollars of new spending and the tax increases on American families, I do agree that we need to invest in hydrogen R&D. That said, \$8 billion for regional hydrogen hubs is a massive expansion.

In FY21, the Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technologies Office had a budget of just \$150 million, which means funding for these regional hubs will increase funding for these activities by more than a factor of 50. And by the way – if we can get \$8 billion dollars for these hubs, can we get some funding for the Versatile Test Reactor? If electric vehicles are infrastructure, then surely VTRs are too!

Regardless, we need to ensure that these massive investments in regional hydrogen hubs produce results that can be used in a way that benefits the American taxpayer. While I'm optimistic that these hubs will be successful, I am concerned that such a large expansion leaves us vulnerable to inefficient spending. Scaling up programs like this is not easy, and I'm also concerned that critical research and development activities will fall behind.

Putting our all our eggs in one basket could leave us in a scenario where hydrogen's ultimate widespread deployment is stalled by the need for more research. DOE needs to be active in this space, supporting robust R&D programs and activities, including at the fundamental and basic research level to complement, or even complete, the work done at these hubs.

Through a coordinated, cross-cutting effort with the Offices of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Fossil Energy, Nuclear Energy, Electricity, ARPA-E, and the Office of Science, DOE is uniquely positioned to advance key components of affordable production, transport, storage, and use of clean hydrogen across different sectors. But in order to do that effectively, we need to update and modernize the scope of DOE's hydrogen research and development activities.

The Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technologies Office was last authorized in 2005 and the authorizing language focuses on a narrow range of application areas. Think about how much your phone has modernized in the last 15 years! That is why I am pleased we are close to finalizing legislation that provides strong support and long-term guidance for hydrogen research, development, and demonstration at DOE.

We need to make sure the U.S. research enterprise isn't simply reacting to discoveries, they are driving them and staying at the forefront of what's next.

I am hopeful that today's hearing will inform the final steps to producing this legislation. I want to thank my colleagues for their bipartisan work on this issue and look forward to the discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.