



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Randy Weber

Energy Subcommittee Hearing – Science and Energy Research Infrastructure Needs of
the U.S. Department of Energy

April 27, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Bowman. And thank you for convening this hearing on this important topic.

We are facing serious threats to our country's energy security, reliability, and affordability. Just ask anyone who has filled up their car with gas recently or suffered through a power outage in freezing weather. These are complex problems, but we will not solve them unless we are willing to confront the underlying basic scientific questions and technical roadblocks. And there is no one better positioned to do that than the U.S. Department of Energy.

The Department's Office of Science is our country's largest supporter of basic research in physical sciences and takes on today's toughest fundamental challenges in physics, chemistry, materials science, biology, and computer science.

DOE's 28 scientific user facilities house the advanced equipment required for cutting-edge research, such as high power lasers, particle accelerators, and advanced supercomputers.

These are capabilities that only the Federal government can provide. If we fail to sustain our support for these tremendous resources, we are not only squandering our previous investments but putting our clean energy future, national security and international competitiveness at risk. The Chinese Communist Party is open about their ambition to replace the United States as the world's scientific and economic leader. Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine have sparked global instability and economic uncertainty. If we allow our research infrastructure to fall behind, our international rivals will gain control of the most crucial emerging industries and we will no longer attract top international talent to our institutions.

I have championed the importance of basic research throughout my time on the Science Committee. I would say that I feel like a broken record, but it still appears that not everyone has gotten the message.

For Fiscal Year 2023, the Department of Energy has requested a less than five percent increase for the Office of Science. Meanwhile, the Department has requested a 56 percent increase for ARPA-E, and includes massive increases for activities within EERE (E-E-R-E), like a 44 percent increase for the Vehicle Technologies Office, an 84 percent increase for the Solar Energy Technologies Office, and a whopping 200 percent increase for the Wind Energy Technologies Office.

I fear that this request is not sufficient to support the numerous construction projects and upgrades required to maintain the Office of Science's top-of-the-line facilities and address emerging challenges for these projects. Instead, the proposal appears to be more focused on Green New Deal talking points than on mission-critical DOE needs.

How many clean energy innovations will come from increased funding for corporate support programs and solar energy soft cost reduction? I can answer that: none.

I look forward to hearing more about this request and how the Department plans to maintain its commitment to our critical research infrastructure and user facilities. We cannot shy away from asking tough questions and pushing for specific answers at these hearings.

We have a responsibility to our constituents to ensure our federal agencies are stewarding their hard-earned dollars responsibly. Additionally, while we have done a lot of good work in Congress and at this Committee to support the Department's research enterprise, failure to invest our federal funds wisely will undermine that progress. I am also looking forward to learning more about the myriad changes announced for the Department.

To date, Congress has received few details on how the Department-wide reorganization will impact coordination between program offices, and how newly-created program offices will cooperate with existing ones to administer R&D programs and prevent duplicative efforts.

Crosscutting issues such as grid security and critical mineral availability require efficient communication and seamless cooperation among program offices, so we must come out of this hearing with a clearer view of this new structure.

Under Secretary Richmond, thank you for your testimony today, and I'm especially glad to see you here in person. I look forward to working with you to maximize the value of our federal R&D investments. I yield back the balance of my time.