



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

Opening Statement of Energy Subcommittee Ranking Member Randy Weber

Joint Investigations & Oversight and Energy Subcommittee Hearing *Management and Spending Challenges within the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy*

February 5, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Foster and Chairwoman Fletcher for holding today's joint subcommittee hearing. I'm looking forward to hearing from our witnesses about DOE's management of its clean energy research, development, demonstration and commercialization activities.

The Department's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy aims to make advanced clean energy technologies and services more available and reliable while lowering costs to both users and society as a whole.

EERE is tasked as the lead federal agency for clean energy research and development, with programs in transportation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. And on the Energy Subcommittee, we've held many hearings on its work this Congress.

So by now, we all know that after substantial growth during the Obama Administration, EERE is by far DOE's largest applied research program.

With its fiscal year 2020 appropriated levels approaching \$3 billion in annual funding, EERE is bigger today than all of the R&D funding provided for fossil energy, nuclear energy, electricity, and cybersecurity combined.

Our national debt is at \$23 trillion and rising. So any major federal investment like what we are seeing at EERE deserves the Department's justification and our full attention each year. With so many of the taxpayer's dollars at stake, a blank check tied to poorly defined priorities is just as wasteful as spending money on a failed project. Careful management of EERE's abundant resources should be a priority of the Department and of this committee.

That's why I want to be clear – I'm supportive of Congressional oversight of DOE's R&D activities. It is our job to make inquiries into the effective management of these programs – especially the highly funded ones.

But I'd like to take this moment to echo Ranking Member Norman's comments on today's oversight discussion. I believe today's inquiry misses the forest for the trees.

After reviewing documents provided to this committee, it is clear that DOE has operated appropriately and within its mandate for responsible grant funding review. The Department did not withhold executed grants or cancel any promise, EERE simply did its job.

And a key part of that job is to take the necessary time to faithfully review the benefits of potential grants to the Department and ensure they meet the mission goals set forth by the current Administration.

We simply can't afford to recklessly spend Federal money. I applaud the Department's leadership on their attempts to develop fluid and clearly defined funding opportunities that advance energy innovation in line with their strategic plan.

In fact, I would respectfully argue that finding additional opportunities for this kind of goal optimization across the Department would be a better use of this committee's time and oversight resources.

It is imperative that we in Congress, take a responsible approach to energy research, and ensure that federal investments go towards work that maximizes our investment in next-generation technologies.

That means we must make the best effort to focus federal programs on innovative technologies that aren't already commercially deployed and to take the long-term approach to address key national issues of energy reliability, resilience, and security.

I look forward to hearing from Assistant Secretary Daniel Simmons on the programs within EERE that are doing just that. Since his ceremonial swearing-in exactly one year ago tomorrow, Assistant Secretary Simmons has done an excellent job of focusing EERE's work on the overall mission goals of the Department set by the Secretary of Energy and the Trump Administration.

I hope we can have a productive conversation this morning about how we in Congress can continue to support them in that mission to address America's energy challenges while supporting our national security and prosperity.

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