

Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Energy Hearing on
“The Fiscal Year 2019 Department of Energy Budget”
April 12, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

I’d like to begin by welcoming Secretary Perry to his second appearance before the Energy and Commerce Committee to discuss the President’s Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request for the Department of Energy. As we’ve explored through our “DOE Modernization” hearings, a lot has changed since Congress created the department over 40 years ago – especially on the national security and energy security front.

Under the secretary’s leadership, the department is undertaking ambitious reforms to strengthen our energy security, reduce regulatory burdens, and spur economic growth. Today’s hearing will provide the secretary with an opportunity to update the committee on the progress made toward achieving the goals he set for the department, and to discuss how the budget request will help further DOE’s mission to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the United States.

As we’ve discussed before, DOE and Congress must work cooperatively to adapt its management and mission priorities to reflect the realities of today. At my direction, Chairman Upton and Vice Chairman Barton have begun this work, and it’s starting to bear fruit. Over the last few months, the committee has held legislative hearings on bipartisan bills to enhance DOE’s emergency response capabilities, strengthen the physical security and cybersecurity of the nation’s electric grid and pipelines, and streamline the process for reviewing LNG export applications. DOE has been a good partner, contributing testimony and technical assistance to help fine-tune these bills. It’s my expectation that this constructive approach will continue to pay off as we dig deeper to address DOE’s core missions of nuclear energy, environmental cleanup, and mission-enabling science.

The President’s FY 2019 budget requests \$30.9 billion dollars for the Department of Energy to deliver on its commitments to the American people. Almost half of the budget would go toward the department’s

nuclear security mission, roughly a quarter would be spent on environmental management, and the remaining amount would go toward DOE's energy and science programs.

I'm pleased to see that the budget also includes funding to fulfill DOE's legacy cleanup responsibilities, including the Hanford Site, which is located just across the Columbia River from my constituents. The secretary and I toured Hanford together last year. The cleanup work at Hanford requires deliberate oversight by DOE and we will continue to monitor the projects, particularly when involving worker safety. While many technical and logistical challenges remain, we're beginning to see some progress and I trust that Secretary Perry's renewed focus on Hanford will accelerate these results. I'm pleased the budget includes funding to restart the Yucca Mountain project, so the waste currently sitting at Hanford, and around the country, will be permanently disposed.

This year's budget request is notable in its emphasis on energy security, in particular, combating physical and cyber-attacks to our nation's energy infrastructure. As the sector-specific agency for cybersecurity for the energy sector, DOE must ensure unity of effort and serve as the day-to-day federal interface for the prioritization and coordination of activities across government.

I got a firsthand look at some of DOE's testing capabilities, unique facilities, and advanced tools during my recent tour of Idaho National Laboratory, where our experts are working to protect our economy and the safety of our citizens from the hackers who are waging cyberwar on our critical infrastructure. Just last month, for the first time ever, the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI jointly issued an alert, formally accusing the Russian Government of a widespread hacking campaign targeting a wide swath of our energy infrastructure, including our grid, pipelines, and nuclear facilities. I commend the secretary for taking this threat seriously, and for his efforts to improve the department's ability to detect and respond to these emerging threats.

While the department works to keep the lights on in the event of a cyber-attack, it is also working to improve the resiliency and reliability of the electric grid in the face of a rapidly changing power generation mix. Congress has provided the secretary with a variety of tools to address

grid reliability, including Emergency Order authority under Section 202(c) of the Federal Power Act to avert a power crisis. While this authority has been rarely used in the past, DOE has already received two requests within the past 12 months, including a potentially precedent-setting request involving struggling coal and nuclear plants in the Midwest.

As I've stated before, I support an all-of-the-above approach, and feel strongly that a diverse generation mix is essential to our nation's energy security. I look forward to continue working with Secretary Perry as he weighs these important issues.