

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Energy hearing
“DOE Modernization: The Office of Cybersecurity,
Energy Security, and Emergency Response”

September 27, 2018

Today’s hearing will enable the Subcommittee to consider the current set up and plans for the Department of Energy’s new Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response.

The CESER office, as we have come to call it, represents an important new element of the Department, with a mission to carry out DOE’s energy security and energy emergency functions more effectively.

Throughout this Congress, we have identified key features of Departmental modernization. These include the need for sufficient leadership and coordinated attention across the agency’s many programs and operations to get ahead of the risks to our modern energy systems. To underscore this, we moved through committee HR 5174, The Energy Emergency Leadership Act, which would establish permanent assistant-secretary-level leadership over emergency response and cybersecurity functions.

While enacting this into law takes time, I commend the Secretary of Energy for assigning this level of leadership, under his authority, and for creating the CESER office this year.

We are reminded weekly of the urgency for getting this leadership structure up and running smoothly. The risks are varied and complex.

We have devastating weather events and other natural hazards that can deprive communities of energy supplies. We are seeing increasing risks to our energy delivery systems by nation states, intent on using cyber controls and vulnerabilities to threaten to leave regions of the nation without power.

The work to be better prepared for these risks, and to be responsive when incidents occur is as urgent as ever. There are critical gaps. We have learned over the past year that energy supplies through pipeline systems to power our bulk electric system may not be fully coordinated within the electric sector to prepare for or respond to cyber or other risks. I sponsored HR 5175, to help increase DOE's coordination with other agencies and stakeholders on this front.

The pieces are coming together for the Department to help DOE confront these risks. We now have a Senate confirmed head of the CESER office. And I'm pleased to welcome her this morning.

Assistant Secretary Karen Evans, was sworn in just one month ago, but her back ground in government suggests she brings some necessary skills to improve coordination across the agency, and across the federal government.

Prior to her recent work leading the U.S. Cyber Challenge, a public private partnership to reduce the skills gap in cybersecurity, Ms. Evans served as the top information technology official at OMB during the Bush Administration—

effectively the federal government's Chief Information Officer. Prior to that she was Chief Information Officer at DOE, so she knows the department.

I'd like to learn today what other pieces are necessary to ensure the new Office can fully carry out DOE's responsibilities. One important area concerns the Department's role as a sector specific agency for energy-related emergencies, including cyber security threats to our energy systems.

It would be helpful to understand CESER's role in carrying out this responsibility, and how the Assistant Secretary plans to work with other agencies, especially the Department of Homeland Security. What does DOE bring to the table to enhance the overall federal effort to guard our energy systems against cyber-attacks and provide the resources if those attacks are successful?

In addition, what DOE is learning from recent natural disasters and what additional steps it plans to take to more effectively respond to energy supply disruptions?

We heard in an earlier hearing with the Under Secretary of Energy that the expectations for what DOE can do in an emergency exceed its authorities. Let's discuss what more DOE can do, and work to see if we can address its authorities.

Without question, DOE serves on the front lines in the federal efforts to assure critical energy infrastructure protection, from all hazards. It provides the technological, operational, and informational expertise to assist stakeholders and other agencies. I'd like this hearing to help clarify just what DOE is doing to ensure it meets this critical mission. #####