



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas as Prepared for the Record

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

April 27, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Bowman, for hosting this important hearing, and thank you Under Secretary Richmond for your time and testimony this morning.

While the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology has jurisdiction over all of the Department of Energy’s civilian R&D programs, as well as the 17 DOE National Laboratories, this hearing with the Under Secretary will focus on the Department’s fiscal year 2023 priorities for several key programs within this broad jurisdiction – such as the Office of Science, the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, and the Office of Nuclear Energy.

DOE is the nation’s largest federal sponsor of basic research in the physical sciences and is a world leader in technology development and innovation. As such, it plays an essential role in the U.S. research ecosystem. On the Science Committee, we recognize that this ecosystem must help us overcome our two most significant immediate challenges: the need to address global climate change and the need to maintain U.S. leadership in science and technology.

We know that DOE is uniquely positioned to meet both challenges, particularly through its Office of Science. The Office of Science supports the kind of fundamental research that will not only enable the development of next-generation clean energy technologies but will also support U.S. competitiveness in science and establish our global leadership in industries of the future.

The best part is that investing in this basic research spurs our economy without duplicating work that can and should be done by the private sector. It’s the most efficient way for the government to support American scientific progress.

Last summer, the Science Committee worked together to pass H.R. 3593, the DOE Science for the Future Act, in the House with 351 votes. If enacted, this overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation would be the first comprehensive authorization of the Office of

Science. It includes detailed program direction and substantial funding for DOE basic research programs and critical research infrastructure at the DOE National Laboratories.

In February, the Senate introduced S. 3699, the DOE Science for the Future Act of 2022, a direct companion to this legislation which includes robust investments for Office of Science programs across the board.

Yet, despite the broad, bipartisan, and bicameral support for sustained Office of Science growth, this Administration continues to demonstrate a lack of commitment to this office and its world-leading facilities. I am surprised and deeply concerned to see that, while the Department's budget request includes funding increases as high as 60% for other program offices, it includes just a 4.3% increase for the Office of Science and inadequate funding profiles for its high priority National Laboratory research facilities.

The Office of Science is the engine that drives breakthrough scientific discoveries. As I said earlier, it conducts the basic research that allows for new, more efficient and cleaner energy technologies. Why then is DOE underfunding it?

EERE and the Loan Program Office, for instance, invest in mature technologies and community projects. While there is certainly a role for this kind of work at DOE, we're shooting ourselves in the foot when we prioritize these over DOE's clean energy innovation work. We're sacrificing future discoveries for feel-good policies today.

So I'd like to hear from the Under Secretary just how DOE plans to adequately support the Office of Science's infrastructure and research programs with such a constrained budget. I know many on this committee and in the research community are looking for answers.

This is just one of our areas of concern this morning. As all of my friends here know, last Congress, the Science Committee worked together to pass the Energy Act of 2020, the first comprehensive update of U.S. energy policy in over a decade. It includes more than a dozen bills from this committee and focuses on competitive clean energy solutions driven by research across DOE's applied energy offices.

Last May, this committee heard from Secretary Granholm about DOE's plans to fully implement this legislation. A lot has changed in since we spoke with the Secretary last year. The Department received over \$62 billion through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). And to accommodate this overwhelming influx of taxpayer dollars, DOE has undergone a major restructuring, established several new offices, and has announced a plan to hire 1,000 new workers through the Clean Energy Corps.

I led a letter to Secretary Granholm last week asking for more information about this hiring spree. I'm concerned that this initiative lacks strategy and foresight, and that it

could end up duplicating or undermining other important work by the Department to advance clean energy technologies.

I hope to hear more about that program today. I also look forward to receiving an update from the Under Secretary on the Energy Act authorized activities under her purview, like the enhanced geothermal systems demonstration and FORGE activities, the low dose radiation research program, and U.S. contributions to the ITER project. Additionally, I hope this hearing touches on her plans to coordinate with the Undersecretary for Infrastructure on management of clean energy demonstration projects and grid R&D activities within this committee's jurisdiction.

I want to thank Under Secretary Richmond for her testimony today, and for outlining her plans to support our federal R&D enterprise in fiscal year 2023 and beyond. I look forward to a productive discussion.