

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Full Committee Markup
May 23, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Smith, for holding today's markup of three important bills that support science and innovation at DOE. The bills that we are considering today reflect many bipartisan priorities and I hope each of them will receive strong support from Committee Members on both sides of the aisle today.

The first bill we are considering, the "Department of Energy Science and Innovation Act of 2018" provides important statutory direction to one of the most critical agencies that this Committee oversees. The Department of Energy's Office of Science funds a wide-range of research and development that has far-reaching impacts across DOE, the federal government, academia, and industry. Much of this language is derived from previous bipartisan, bicameral agreements that were included in H.R. 589, the House-passed "Department of Energy Research and Innovation Act of 2017."

As we await Senate action on that legislation, I support moving forward with additional language included in today's bill that would authorize upgrades to important Office of Science user facilities, direct DOE to provide sufficient support to maintain our commitments to the ITER international fusion project, and provide statutory authority to fund low-dose radiation research as well as a promising computational materials initiative at our national labs.

I am also happy to see robust funding levels included in this bipartisan bill, particularly for the Biological and Environmental Research program, which supports critical research to reduce uncertainties and better understand the impacts of climate change. If signed into law, I want to make it clear that I expect the Department of Energy to appropriately fund and steward all of these activities, including important work in environmental systems modeling.

However, amidst all the positive aspects of this bill, I must say that I am a little disappointed in the process that we used to get to this markup. With a more deliberative and collaborative process, we certainly could have produced more comprehensive, well-vetted language that better reflects input from national laboratories, academic institutions, and industry on important projects and programs funded by the Office of Science. Such a process would have made a good bill better.

The next bill we are considering is the "National Innovation Modernization by Laboratory Empowerment Act." This bill would provide our national laboratories with the authority to directly enter into certain research agreements with the private sector as long as those activities align with the laboratories' strategic plans approved by the Department of Energy. This bill also includes appropriate safeguards to prevent waste, fraud, or abuse. I am happy to see us moving forward once again with this important policy change.

The “ARPA-E Act of 2018” is a welcome development from my perspective. I understand some of my Majority colleagues have not always been the biggest supporters of ARPA-E, but after years of successes and several independent assessments praising the agency’s work, we are finally passing a bill out of this Committee reauthorizing this now-vital component of our energy innovation pipeline.

This bill preserves the mission and form of ARPA-E, while enabling it to also consider funding projects or technologies that can address DOE’s monumental and longstanding challenge of environmental cleanup at the legacy sites of the Manhattan Project. It also includes language from a bipartisan ARPA-E Reauthorization Act that I introduced last year which would ensure that sensitive business information collected by the agency remains protected. This will enable even greater private sector engagement in its programs.

ARPA-E projects have attracted more than 2.6 billion dollars in private sector follow-on funding. 71 projects have formed new companies and 109 have gone on to partner with other government agencies to further their research. I want to thank the Chairman and Congressman Lucas for embracing ARPA-E’s innovative model and joining me in supporting its reauthorization.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I yield back.