

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Chairman
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
The Department of Energy Fiscal Year 2012 Research and Development Budget Request

March 3, 2011

I want to welcome everyone here today for this hearing on the President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget request for the Department of Energy.

This is the third time that Secretary Chu has appeared before this Committee, and I want to thank him for his willingness to be here and meet with our Members on Department of Energy programs and priorities. This is also the third DOE budget that the President has sent Congress, so its general priorities—and my concerns with them—should come as no surprise.

What is notable, however, is the degree to which the President has “doubled-down” on his energy and climate agenda in light of the continued struggling economy, trillion-dollar deficits, rising gas prices, and fuel supply concerns driven by Middle East turmoil.

The centerpiece of this agenda is the President's proposed requirement that the U.S. produce 80 percent of its electricity from “clean” sources by 2035. While I want to better understand how the Administration intends to reach this goal, and while I strongly support an “all-of-the-above” approach to energy security, I'm concerned that this plan entails spending we can't afford and taxes and regulations that would raise the cost of energy and harm our economy.

The merits of this proposal seem weakened further by the fact that, even if such a transition to “clean” electricity were successful, its benefits in terms of the effect it could have on climate change appears negligible.

My concerns regarding misplaced energy policy priorities extend to the R&D budget as well. The fossil fuels that drive our economy and meet over 80 percent of our energy needs continue to be penalized in favor of “cleaner” alternatives.

For example, the Natural Gas and Unconventional Fossil Energy Technologies programs are zeroed out while energy efficiency and renewable energy R&D programs would receive a \$1 billion, or 44 percent, increase above current levels. And these increases come on the heels of over \$16 billion in Stimulus funding and a near-doubling of the EERE base budget since FY 2006. I'm also concerned that much of this “clean energy” spending is focused on late-stage technology development and commercialization more appropriately performed by the private sector.

The changes called for in this budget are not just trends—they represent dramatic shifts that warrant our close review and consideration in the coming weeks and months. While I have many concerns, I look forward to working with the Secretary, Ranking Member Johnson, and members of the Committee to develop a thorough and constructive response to these proposals.

I now recognize Ranking Member Johnson for five minutes for an opening statement.