

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Ralph Hall (R-TX), Ranking Member**  
U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology  
Full Committee markup

- H.R. 5716, *Safer Oil and Natural Gas Drilling Technology Research and Development Act*
- H.R. 2693, the *Oil Pollution Research and Development Program Reauthorization Act of 2010*

Wednesday, July 14, 2010

As the disaster in the Gulf nears three full months and we await the results of the latest attempt to cap the well and stop the leak, our understanding of the precise causes of the accident—and the missteps in the days that followed—remain unclear. These unanswered questions should serve to advise against temptations to overreact to the disaster, especially given the importance of the offshore oil and gas industry to the Gulf Coast economy and America’s energy independence goals.

Regardless of the ultimate causes of and best rest responses to the disaster it makes sense to continue pursuing improvements to safe and environmentally responsible drilling operations, as well as effective spill response systems. This Committee will play a key role in this effort, and the legislation before us today will have a significant impact on future drilling and environmental response mitigation efforts.

The first bill we will consider, H.R. 2693, amends the Federal Oil Spill Research Program Act. This legislation was introduced last year and had gone through a subcommittee markup, demonstrating once again this Committee’s foresight of the research and development needs of the nation. Today, we markup an Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute that changes the bill in ways that reflect the concerns of members on both sides of the aisle and testimony we received both last year and last month...

The second bill we will consider amends the drilling technologies R&D program established by Section 999 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. I led creation of this program in 2005, and I believe it has contributed significantly to recent technological advances that are enabling recovery of energy supplies that we knew existed but were unable to access. Further, with its established program structure and network of worldwide private and public sector experts, it is the only R&D program in the Federal government capable of addressing priority drilling safety and accident prevention-related technology needs in a timely and effective manner.

Unfortunately, despite its clear and growing importance, the program remains targeted by the Administration and others in Congress for termination. I think this represents a clear mis-prioritization, and I am glad that Chairman Gordon agrees and worked closely with me on the bill before us today. I may quibble with some of the details, but I believe the committee print represents a reasonable compromise that will preserve and strengthen this successful program.

Again, I thank the Chairman and the majority for working with Republicans on both of these bills, and I look forward to continuing this effort as these vehicles move through the legislative process.

I yield back.