



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

For Immediate Release
November 18, 2015

Media Contact: Zachary Kurz
(202) 225-6371

Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Recommendations of the Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories

Chairman Smith: Good afternoon. Today we will hear recommendations from the Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories. The Director of Argonne National Lab also will testify with his perspective on how the labs could operate more effectively.

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology's jurisdiction over the country's "scientific research, development, and demonstration" makes possible American innovation and competitiveness. The Department of Energy (DOE) is the largest federal supporter of basic research and sponsors 47 percent of federal basic research in the physical sciences.

The Department's science and energy research infrastructure at its 17 National Labs and user facilities are utilized by over 31,000 scientific researchers each year. The Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Laboratories was established by Congress to assess strategic priorities, unique capabilities, size, and accomplishments of this research network.

The Commissioners here today visited national labs, interviewed researchers and DOE officials, and compiled a detailed report with recommendations on how Congress and the DOE can ensure the national labs are able to reach their full potential.

Last month, the Commission released its final report. It found that the DOE lab system provides unique, long-term research capabilities and facilities that could not otherwise be reproduced by universities or the private sector.

However, the Commission also found that the labs spend an excessive amount of time to navigate through government red tape created by the DOE. Burdensome operating requirements can delay research projects and make it more difficult for researchers to pursue high-value science.

Congress has limited resources for research and development. We have a responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and effectively. To achieve the best return on investment for the American people, we must ensure the DOE labs are able to realize their full potential.

I thank our witnesses for their testimony today and I look forward to a productive discussion about how we can improve our national labs. A primary goal of this Committee is to ensure that federal research and development is effectively directed.

As we consider how to best direct the Department of Energy, we must focus on policies that enable breakthrough discoveries.

With improvements in the effectiveness of the national lab system we can keep the best and brightest researchers here in the United States to continue to explore new ideas.

This allows the national labs to provide the foundation for private sector development across the energy spectrum, create jobs, and grow the American economy.

###