

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Department of Energy Oversight: Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Chairman Smith: Good morning. Today, the Subcommittee on Energy will examine the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, commonly referred to as "E-E-R-E." The Department describes EERE as, "The U.S. Government's primary clean energy technology organization."

EERE's goals sound worthy enough. It seeks to reduce the use of fossil fuels, lower emissions, and speed up the adoption and decrease the cost of clean energy technology in transportation, renewable power and energy efficiency.

However, while the EERE is billed as leading clean energy research and development, there are fundamental concerns with EERE's approach to advancing energy technology. EERE's activities demonstrate that it is heavily invested in forcing the Administration's preferred technology on the American people.

When the government picks winners and losers in the energy technology marketplace, the American people pay the price. The Solar Energy Technologies Program within EERE offers a ready example. This program's goal is to reduce the cost of solar power until they are cost-competitive with electricity from fossil fuels. It aims to achieve this goal by 2020.

But because the program is focused on cost, not technology, EERE spends taxpayer dollars to market and deploy existing solar technology. Instead of research on the fundamental science behind solar energy, or development of new solar technology, EERE spends taxpayer dollars on "permitting, financing, and customer acquisition." It essentially puts promoting energy companies over research and development.

Addressing these issues may help the solar industry market their product, but that is short-sighted and doesn't really make solar energy more competitive in the long term.

The Department of Energy should perform groundbreaking scientific research and develop new technologies, not spend American tax dollars to promote what is already commercially available. The federal government should invest in basic research that could open the door for widespread use of solar and other renewable energy technology in the future.

For example, energy storage research and development at the Joint Center for Energy Storage Research hub in the Office of Science explores new energy storage possibilities through basic scientific research.

This energy storage research could have a groundbreaking impact not just on the solar industry, but also on all forms of energy.

The President's budget proposal for EERE includes a 42 percent, or \$809 million, increase in spending. This is almost three times the requested increase for the Office of Science.

In Congress, we have the responsibility to ensure the efficient and effective use of American tax dollars. We can't afford to impose expensive and inefficient technology on the energy market. We do not have unlimited resources, so we will have to make choices about where to make the best investment for the American people.

By investing in basic research that benefits all forms of energy, we can make energy less expensive, and that benefits consumers and helps the U.S. achieve energy independence.