

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ralph Hall (R-TX)
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science
*The Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy (ARPA-E): Assessing the Agency’s
Progress and Promise in Transforming the U.S. Energy Innovation System*
Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at 10:00 am

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing today on the Department of Energy’s Advanced Research Projects Agency, or ARPA-E.

There is little if any disagreement in this Committee on the importance of fundamental advances in energy technologies to America’s future economic and national security. It is a priority that all of our Members share, and a principle from which we are able to work together.

The challenge lies in how best to structure the Federal government’s involvement in energy R&D to maximize use of limited resources.

For a number of reasons, I opposed the creation of ARPA-E in 2007. I was concerned that the DARPA model could not be applied successfully to the energy sector. I was concerned about the lack of clarity in the mission and scope of ARPA-E, and whether it could result in government interference in private markets.

And I was concerned that creation of a new agency would compete with and reduce funding for DOE’s Office of Science, which was a top priority of the “*Gathering Storm*” report as well as our America COMPETES legislation. Now, over two years since the legislation establishing ARPA-E was signed into law, my original concerns largely remain. This is primarily because the agency’s operations are still in the formative stages, with the first round of grants being announced just last Fall.

The absence of a record upon which to make informed judgments regarding ARPA-E may be the most difficult aspect of its reauthorization. Without such a record, I’m afraid we are left with a mostly conceptual debate similar to the one we had in 2007. Accordingly, I expect that we’ll ask many of the same questions. But this time maybe the answers will be different...or at least more meaningful, since we have the benefit of a new ARPA-E Director to provide responses and help us understand his vision for the agency.

I thank Chairman Gordon for working closely with me on these issues and for assembling this distinguished panel of experts today. Inasmuch that ARPA-E is now law—which we supported as part of the America COMPETES Act—I want to work with the Chairman as the program gets off its feet to make sure it is the success that he believes it can be.