

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**The Honorable Paul Broun M.D. (R-GA), Chairman**  
Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight  
*The Science of Green Building Rating Systems*

May 8, 2012

The federal government is a major developer and operator of commercial buildings nationwide. The energy consumption of these buildings is a significant expense to taxpayers. Since federal buildings tend to be left untouched for many years, up-front investments in truly energy saving technologies can save taxpayer dollars in the long run. One only has to walk along Pennsylvania Avenue to see how long some federal buildings go without energy efficiency upgrades.

Ongoing efforts by the Department of Energy have led to the development of new technologies and strategies to reduce federal building consumption and the related energy bill. Many of these efforts reflect common sense approaches to saving money such as more efficient air conditioners and better insulation. There are other efforts that I have concerns with, such as the \$10 million “L Prize” award from the Department of Energy to the manufacturer of a \$50 LED light bulb. Even with taxpayer subsidies, a \$50 light bulb has a very long payback period.

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 directed DOE to choose one or more third-party rating systems every five years for federal buildings. I have several questions about how this process has worked in the past and how it will work in the future. In 2007, GSA and DOE chose the LEED rating system and the federal government has used this system on a large number of projects. I am interested in learning how the federal government has benefited from using LEED over the past five years. Specifically, are taxpayers saving money as a result of LEED standards?

The current five-year cycle is coming to a close and the Pacific Northwest National Lab released its review of private-sector green building certification systems last week. Our second panel contains representatives from two of the three certification systems that were studied in detail in the report, LEED and Green Globes. As private entities, they are free to operate as they wish. However, both of these entities directly benefit financially from the federal government paying them to use their rating systems. I’d like to hear about the differences between the two systems, why these differences exist, and why one is more deserving of receiving taxpayer dollars. I’d also like to learn why both of their rating systems are more effective than one that could be developed by DOE and GSA themselves.

I am also concerned that consensus appears to be missing in some cases. For example, the timber certification standards recognized by the two rating systems represented today are different. What scientific basis, if any, exists to explain this difference? Why is some of Mr. Talbot’s wood effectively devalued by a government adoption of a third party standard? Does GSA and

DOE agree with the preference for FSC wood in LEED and its impact on Mr. Talbot's business and his employees?

Recent proposed changes to LEED for 2012 also appear to penalize some common building materials with little to no basis in science such as PVC piping. I'm not sure why PVC piping in a warehouse is such a concern. Shouldn't we instead be focusing on saving taxpayer dollars rather than social engineering?

As the Science Committee, we should be guided by metrics that identify where federal investments will have the most cost-effective impact. A full life-cycle assessment can help determine which of potentially many choices has the lowest overall cost. And prior investments should be verified by peer-reviewed research to ensure that taxpayer dollars were spent properly.

As I've said before, our nation is in an economic crisis with high debt and unemployment. Adopting standards for federal buildings that truly save the taxpayer money and put Americans to work is a good idea. In contrast, adopting standards that don't save taxpayer money or tell American workers that the products they make are not welcome in federal buildings defies common sense.