



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

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Statement from Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Advancing Solar Energy Technology: Research Trumps Deployment

Chairman Smith: Today, the Subcommittee on Energy will examine the Department of Energy's (DOE) efforts to refocus the solar energy program on early-stage research and breakthrough solar technologies.

This hearing specifically will consider the rapid integration of solar energy technology in the energy market, and discuss the appropriate role for DOE investment in solar energy research in the future. Fundamental science and technological capabilities still challenge solar energy advancement, but it is crucial that the department focus on basic and early-stage research that cannot be conducted by the private sector.

For far too long, the American public saw their taxpayer funds pick winners and losers in the energy market. The previous administration often played favorites and invested heavily in the deployment of photovoltaic (PV) technology into electricity markets. While this approach may have sped the deployment of today's solar energy, it did not lead to the kind of breakthrough technology in solar energy, manufacturing and energy storage that is needed to help solar energy compete without tax credits, mandates or subsidies.

This committee supports DOE's role in funding basic and early-stage research that the private sector is truly unable to explore on its own.

It is these kinds of breakthroughs – in new materials, electrochemistry and advanced manufacturing – that will lead to the next generation of solar energy technology.

The president's fiscal year 2018 budget request also supports investment in early-stage applied research in solar energy. The budget request directs federal investment into the kind of research that industry cannot support and that can lead to new solar energy technology. This clearly signals the administration's push for American energy dominance and independence.

I want to welcome Mr. Daniel Simmons, the principal deputy assistant secretary for EERE (Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy) to testify today. It is critical that we hear directly from the department on policy changes and the direction of DOE research programs.

I thank our witnesses today for testifying about their valuable efforts in renewable energy programs, research and for sharing their insights into emerging solar energy technology. I look forward to a productive discussion about early-stage research at DOE and the right approach to federal research investment.

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