

OPENING STATEMENT

The Honorable Andy Harris (R-MD), Chairman

Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

An Examination of DOE's Clean Technology Programs

June 15, 2011

I thank our witnesses for being here today to testify on the Department of Energy's clean technology programs. I appreciate you taking time from your busy schedules to appear before us this afternoon.

Before discussing the substance of today's hearing, I would like to take a moment to note my displeasure with the Department of Energy's lack of responsiveness to this Committee. Following Secretary Chu's March appearance before the Committee on DOE's 2012 budget request, Members submitted written questions to be answered for the hearing record. The questions were sent to DOE on March 18—three months ago—but the Committee has yet to receive a response. Similarly, on May 4, I sent a letter to Secretary Chu requesting information on many of the programs we are here today to examine. Once more, DOE has yet to respond to my letter, almost a month past the requested response date. The Department's inability to answer fundamental and straightforward questions about programs for which it is requesting billions of dollars not only reflects poorly on the Department; it hinders Congressional oversight and informed budget and policy decision-making. The offices represented today are an excellent case in point—the President is requesting almost \$2 billion in *new spending* for them. I would suggest to DOE that if getting this new money is truly a departmental priority, responding to Congress in a timely fashion should be a priority as well.

The budget and policy context in which we consider DOE's clean technology programs today is clear and sobering. The United States is currently facing a budget deficit of \$1.6 trillion (with a "T") for the current fiscal year and our government is borrowing 40 cents for every dollar we spend. Budget projections for the next decade and beyond bleed red ink. Yet, in spite of this dire fiscal reality, President Obama is requesting massive spending, to the tune of \$8 billion, for "clean" energy technologies. This request comes on the heels of a sixty percent increase in

EERE's base budget over the last six years, over \$16 billion worth of Stimulus spending provided to EERE alone.

While we have only begun to review this spending in detail, indications of wasteful, duplicative, and inappropriate spending abound, and are cause for great concern. At a more fundamental level, I believe the growing attention to and importance of energy policy warrants more careful consideration of the appropriate role of government in energy technology development. While there is broad agreement that economically feasible alternative energy would be of great benefit to the country, the Federal government's increasing tendency to involve itself in the energy marketplace is troubling, and may even be counterproductive.

America grows by unleashing its entrepreneurial spirit, motivated by the rewards of success, not through the government picking winners and losers and allocating capital through politically-driven policies and programs. The U.S. economy thrives on innovation and a free-market, and I look forward to hearing from witnesses today how DOE can better help unleash this innovation by complementing, not supplanting, private efforts.

In May, the economy experienced another month of anemic growth and the unemployment rate remains above 9.0%. It may be counterintuitive to the Washington mindset, but the best way to put American back to work is to get the government out of the private sector's way. I believe this applies as well to energy specifically as it does to the overall economy.

Thank you again for your time and I now recognize Mr. Miller for five minutes for an opening statement.