

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



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Statement of Energy Subcommittee Chairman Randy Weber (R-Texas)
Nuclear Energy Innovation and the National Labs

Chairman Weber: Good morning and welcome to today's Energy Subcommittee hearing on nuclear energy innovation. This hearing will focus on the Department of Energy's national laboratories' research capabilities and working relationship with the private sector to advance nuclear energy technology – both fission and fusion.

The Department of Energy owns seventeen national laboratories, sixteen of which are operated by contractors as federally funded research and development centers. The government-owned, contractor-operated model allows the labs flexibility to think outside of the box when tackling fundamental scientific challenges. The DOE labs grew out of the Manhattan project and today provide the critical R&D infrastructure that will enable researchers in academia and the private sector to develop the technologies of tomorrow.

It's pretty clear that challenges in nuclear science can be quite complicated and we'll hear more about that from our expert witnesses. That said, I will do my best to simplify what we intend to discuss today. We will get a better understanding of what the DOE labs do and how their unique research machines and talented groups of researchers can enable companies to develop new products. This is especially relevant for nuclear energy R&D, which requires large up-front costs, but may lead to revolutionary technology with long-term rewards.

The United States has a national interest in maintaining our position at the forefront of nuclear technology development. Nuclear energy is in a class of its own with the highest energy density of any fuel, and yields zero emissions. It is also highly regulated, often a centerpiece of global politics, and associated with the world's strongest economies.

In the United States, we invented this technology and cannot forgo the opportunity to export more efficient and safer reactor systems that will mitigate proliferation concerns and increase global stability by providing reliable energy.

Today, we will hear from the president of a charitable organization that has co-invested with a DOE lab to advance a specific nuclear fuel treatment process to convert nuclear waste into usable fuel. We will also hear from Argonne National Lab, which invented this fuel treatment process, as well as private companies developing fusion and advanced fission reactors.

Needless to say, this is a unique panel of witnesses. I thank the witnesses for participating in today's hearing and I look forward to their testimony.

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