

OPENING STATEMENT
The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman, Energy and Water Development Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
Hearing on the Department of Energy's
Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Request
March 15, 2011

Our hearing today is on the Fiscal Year 2012 budget request for the Department of Energy. I would like to welcome our witness, Secretary of Energy, Dr. Steven Chu to the hearing.

This has been a tragic weekend. I know all of our hearts and prayers are with the people of Japan as they struggle to recover from the devastations they have suffered, a huge loss of life and livelihoods.

Mr. Secretary, we all recognize that you do not control the energy sector of the United States -- no one person does. But your voice, and the actions of this Administration, have the power to shape opinion and markets. Above all, you have the ability to put our country on a path to a sound, science-based energy policy.

This was true even before Friday's earthquake and tsunami off the coast of Japan. Facing continued unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, four dollar gasoline, and persistently high joblessness, our citizens are crying out for leadership to help resolve these issues. It is little wonder we don't have a cogent energy policy if we can't agree on the domestic and foreign policies that underlie them!

Whether natural or manmade, we must be able to confront disasters or political realities in the Middle East by having a diversity of supply that doesn't leave us hostage to any one source. This nation is blessed with many energy options: unlimited coal supplies, natural gas, oil on shore and off shore, and companies and workers that are willing to tap them for us. Other companies and entrepreneurs are increasingly our renewable footprint and we have, as a country, sun and wind resources and the ingenuity to develop them further. To the Administration's credit, after a 30 year hiatus, we are now committing more resources to a new generation of nuclear power.

I personally support nuclear energy and I want our bill to assure its key role in a clean energy portfolio, alongside other sources, to meet our nation's future needs. This morning we hope to hear from you, Mr. Secretary, about your own commitment as President Obama's chief spokesman on energy policy.

Even more important, we need to hear from you that we have a **STRONG** safety program for our existing plants that has already taken into consideration hurricanes, earthquakes and homeland security measures in their designs and operating procedures. And, yes that Yucca Mountain be reopened!

Unfortunately, while you support nuclear plant construction, your 2012 budget request seems to do more to undermine our national energy security, in the short-term, than help it. Rather than take steps to improve access to domestic sources of fuel, in a cleaner, safer way, your budget would actually cut fossil fuel research and development that we need to meet today's demands. And rather than proposing well-developed, justified increases, your request includes billions of dollars with little more than a paragraph of explanation.

As I have said in every hearing we have had this year, it will be highly unlikely that this subcommittee will see an increase in funding in 2012. And our task this budget cycle is very different than past years: funding the right balance of investments of our most critical needs, with an eye towards those that protect our nation and that create jobs – sustainable jobs.

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