



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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Pallone Opening Remarks at DOE Modernization Hearing

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at an Energy Subcommittee hearing on “DOE Modernization: Advancing DOE’s Mission for National, Economic, and Energy Security of the United States.”*

As we start a new year, it is nice to finally have a full panel of agency witnesses before us. Last year, I was repeatedly disappointed by the Trump Administration’s unwillingness to send agency witnesses before our Committee. Today, we have an experienced panel of senior leadership officials from the Department of Energy (DOE), including two distinguished former Energy and Commerce staffers: Deputy Secretary Dan Brouillette and Undersecretary for Energy Mark Menezes. I’m pleased that they are back with us and I want to welcome them, as well as the other agency officials.

The purpose of this hearing, according to my Republican colleagues, is to weigh whether DOE is in need of “modernization” and what parts of its mission are still necessary. Publicly, my colleagues have discussed a full-fledged effort to reauthorize the Department – an effort that has not occurred since the creation of DOE over 40 years ago. However, so far, they have been short on details. I hope to learn more today about what my Republican colleagues want to achieve in this endeavor.

Specifically, we need to know what real problems at the Department we are attempting to solve. If my Republican colleagues want to take a targeted look at DOE programs to see where improvements can be made, then I am open to listening to their proposals. We might be able to find areas of agreement where we could work together to enact solutions.

However, if the goal is simply to eliminate scores of successful programs and arbitrarily shrink the size of DOE – like the unrealistic and flawed Trump Budget proposed last year – then you’re going to find opposition on this side of the aisle. Last year, President Trump made his priorities clear by proposing a budget for DOE that gutted or eliminated critical programs that have historically had bipartisan support. The president’s budget took a hatchet to popular bipartisan programs like energy efficiency, renewable energy, the loan programs office and the Weatherization Assistance Program. If my Republican colleagues

hope to work together on this, they should know in advance that we will not support any reorganization that harms these programs or others which benefit consumers and help combat climate change.

Similarly, we will not support any reorganization that attempts to shift some – or all – of EPA's programs into DOE.

I do believe there are ways that DOE can improve and more successfully fulfill its mission, and I think we can work together to make those improvements. For example, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), DOE's Office of Environmental Management and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) have demonstrated limited progress in improving contract management, and have struggled to ensure they have the financial and staffing capacity to mitigate risks. We can and must develop bipartisan solutions that address these and other critically important issues.

DOE is a vital part of the executive branch, playing a critical role in incentivizing the development of clean energy technologies, conducting cutting-edge scientific research, and maintaining our nation's nuclear security.

DOE is also home to a number of other agencies that operate independently and are vital to our nation's energy policy including the Energy Information Administration and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). It is critical that the independence of these agencies be maintained. I was pleased to see FERC reaffirming its independence yesterday when the five commissioners unanimously rejected Secretary Perry's proposal to provide preferential rates to coal and nuclear generation.

We have two knowledgeable panels of witnesses before us today, and I look forward to hearing their perspective. I yield back the remainder of my time.

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