



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Submitted For the Record

Energy Subcommittee Hearing

From Transformative Science to Technological Breakthroughs: DOE's National Laboratories

February 12, 2025

Good morning everyone. I want to thank my great friend from Texas, Chairman Weber, and the Energy Subcommittee for holding their first hearing this Congress on the importance of the U.S. Department of Energy's National Laboratories.

As another friend, former Texas Governor and U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry, once said, DOE's 17 National Labs are the "crown jewels" of American science—I couldn't agree more.

I'm grateful we have four esteemed Lab Directors here today, and I'm eager to dive into and hear more about the often-overlooked issue of maintaining the "crown jewel" status of our National Labs.

Many people often focus on topline research spending or shiny new facilities, and while still important, they forget that some of these labs date back to World War II. As a result, essential systems like electrical and water infrastructure are well beyond their expected lifespan.

It is crucial for the federal government to balance the development of new facilities with the maintenance of legacy infrastructure to ensure American preeminence in the coming decades. It is equally important to appropriately prioritize high-risk, high-reward basic research that does not crowd-out private sector investments, rather than favoring special interest groups.

Without appropriately balancing these efforts, there could be major impacts on the overall quality of science conducted at the laboratories and the ability to recruit the best and brightest talent.

Speaking of recruiting—it's becoming just as big of a challenge as funding and scientific complexity. This is largely due to the growing capabilities of our global competitors. Make no mistake: the United States is challenged by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) across multiple emerging sectors, including space, nuclear fusion, quantum, and artificial intelligence.

They are significantly increasing their spending to attract a growing share of the world's top researchers within their borders. This is a clear attempt to outmaneuver the U.S. and lead in technological innovation.

Let me be clear: the CCP represents a significant threat to our American way of life, focused on intimidation and suppression instead of collaboration and freedom. Our nation has always taken pride in and prioritized an open and cooperative research environment.

I hope to learn more today about how the National Laboratories are striking the right balance on research security.

It is imperative that they ensure that key U.S. technologies are protected while also engaging with the hard-working scientific community, who are vital for out-innovating our competitors.

We are also witnessing remarkable advancements in several emerging technologies that are shaping our future. The steps taken by the SST Committee this Congress will significantly impact the development of these technologies in large part by the National Labs, ensuring their successful rollout by the private sector.

I know Idaho National Lab, represented by one of our Directors here this morning, is working closely with a number of small modular reactor startup companies with the hopes of revolutionizing how we see the nuclear industry.

I also understand that Lawrence Livermore is collaborating with the growing commercial fusion sector, which hopes to deliver power to the grid in the next decade. These technological advancements are vital to powering the artificial intelligence expansion currently happening across the globe.

Once again, I cannot overstate the importance of the work our National Laboratories do to safeguard our national security and strengthen America's economic competitiveness and energy security.

I would like to thank our witnesses for their testimony, and I look forward to the important conversation about to take place.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.