

Chairman Dingell at the Committee on Energy and Commerce hearing entitled "Department of Energy's Budget for Fiscal Year 2008"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ENTITLED THE "DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S
BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008"
February 8, 2007

Mr. Secretary, I am pleased to welcome you back to the Committee to discuss the Department of Energy's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request. This is an important opportunity for the Committee to understand the Department's priorities, and for the Secretary to hear the concerns of the Committee Members.

First, I raise the issue of climate change. As you know, the Committee will endeavor to write legislation addressing the issue of global warming. This is a complex and difficult matter. We seek, and hope we can count on, the Administration's involvement.

It is important that Members of the Committee understand the actions of Federal agencies to date, as well as the FY2008 budget proposal's impact on these programs.

In addition, Members need to know the Administration's position on the question of climate change legislation. I have seen recent press reports quoting you on that matter, and I will have questions for you to better understand your statements.

Second, the Department administers a wide variety of statutory responsibilities that we will want to pursue with you, Mr. Secretary. For example, the Energy Policy Act of 2005, included an array of statutory deadlines on energy efficiency and conservation matters that are important for both energy independence and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, the Department does not have a strong record in meeting its appliance efficiency rulemaking deadlines. Representatives Boucher, Markey, and I have asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to examine this problem, and I am sure Members will have questions for you on this matter.

Third, I raise again the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository Program. The Department has estimated it will file a license application with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) by 2008, which the Commission must evaluate for scientific merit. If the Commission grants approval, DOE has said it could begin accepting waste at Yucca Mountain by 2017. None of this, however, can occur if the Department lacks the necessary funding. As you know, Mr. Secretary, I was disappointed that the Administration sent a bill to the Congress last year without fully funding necessary reforms. These reforms would ensure that the contributions of ratepayers to the nuclear waste fund are preserved for their intended purpose. Absent reform, consumer funds are in peril and so is the program. I will have questions for you on that subject, as well.

Finally, Mr. Secretary, you may also be asked about repeated security breaches at Department facilities, particularly the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Mr. Secretary, you have appeared before this Committee on prior occasions, and I know you to be an honest broker. I know you understand that the tough questions Members will ask are part of our responsibility and support the Committee's work. I am grateful for the important work you do at the Department on behalf of the American people and for your appearance before the Committee.

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce
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