

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN ED WHITFIELD
Hearing of the Subcommittee on Energy & Power
March 8, 2012
“DOE Budget Overview”

(As Prepared for Delivery)

There is no question that the nation currently faces serious energy challenges, but I have concerns about the areas in which the Department of Energy is focusing its priorities.

It seems to me that conventional energy sources have, at best, taken a backseat to other types of energy sources like wind and solar. While there is a role for federal research and development of new energy sources and technologies, we need to make sure that taxpayers’ money is spent where we will get the biggest bang for their buck.

Most notably, coal is a proven, reliable, abundant, and affordable source of domestic energy, and one that has become dramatically cleaner in the past few decades. In contrast, many people’s favorite alternatives like wind and solar energy are proving to have major limitations. In my view, they are not capable of taking the load away from coal, at least not without serious harm to electricity affordability as well as reliability.

We all need to recognize what we learned with the Solyndra loan guarantee. Solyndra is the first of a growing list of loan guarantee recipients that face bankruptcy and layoffs, and this should concern us all. Even the recipients that are not facing bankruptcy have yet to come up with genuinely worthwhile breakthroughs.

It is also important to ask what the Department of Energy’s budget has in store on the energy issue that is foremost in the American people’s minds. Nearly 100 years have gone by since the New York Times proclaimed electric vehicles as the vehicle for the future, and we aren’t any closer to an electric vehicle that people would actually want.

Most recently, I’m concerned about two companies scheduled to get more than a half billion dollars each in loan guarantee money – Fisker Automotive and Tesla Motors – have only sold a handful of their high priced electric vehicles, mostly to Hollywood celebrities.

These are just a few topics that I'm concerned about. We need to ensure that taxpayer money is being spent wisely and I look forward to hearing from the secretary further about his views on these subjects and others that might be discussed today.

I now would like to recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Rush for a five minute opening statement.