



Committee: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy & Water Development
Event: [A Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request for the Department of Energy](#)
Date: April 22, 2026

Executive Summary:

On April 22, 2026, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy & Water Development held a hearing to examine the President's fiscal year 2027 budget request for the Department of Energy (DOE). The hearing highlighted a strong partisan divide over energy priorities.

- Republican lawmakers focused on grid reliability, the expansion of baseload power, and the necessity of modernizing the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal.
- Democratic members heavily criticized the proposed budget for cutting clean energy initiatives, research funding, and consumer efficiency programs, while significantly increasing defense spending.
- There was bipartisan consensus on the importance of advancing artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computing to maintain a competitive edge over global adversaries.

Member Toplines:

*Chair John Kennedy (R-LA)*¹: Kennedy praised the Secretary's support for an all-of-the-above energy approach focused on affordability and reliability. He emphasized the need to reduce federal spending, noting past successes in cutting inflation-adjusted spending and expressing a goal to achieve similar restraint while increasing defense funding. He also commented on geopolitical tensions affecting gas prices and expressed concern about a potential government shutdown ahead of the midterms.

Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA): Murray strongly condemned the proposed budget, characterizing it as overly focused on defense and nuclear weapons at the expense of other programs. She specifically criticized the proposed elimination of the Weatherization Assistance Program and deep cuts to the Offices of Science and Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy. Furthermore, she accused DOE of illegally withholding energy rebate funds and canceling energy grants in Democratic-leaning states for political reasons. She vowed to work with the Chairman to draft a completely new budget.

Witness Toplines:

Chris Wright, Secretary, DOE: Wright emphasized that DOE is focused on delivering affordable, reliable, and secure energy, highlighting actions to preserve grid stability and expand

¹ The opening remarks of Chairman Kennedy and Secretary Wright were unavailable at the time of this memo's distribution.

dispatchable power sources. He pointed to increased liquefied natural gas exports, strengthened national security through nuclear deterrence and modernization, and efforts to expand nuclear energy and support advanced technologies like AI and fusion.

Major Takeaways:

- Sen. **Katie Britt** (R-AL) asked how DOE plans to lower energy costs for consumers, given the rising energy demands of AI data centers.
 - Wright responded that the previous administration's policies subsidized unreliable renewable energy, which drove up costs, killed “the economics for existing infrastructure,” and jeopardized grid stability. Wright shared his current focus is on ending those subsidies, uprating existing natural gas and hydropower facilities, and restarting nuclear plants to provide reliable power.
- Sen. **Gary Peters** (D-MI) raised concerns about federal emergency orders keeping coal plants open and noted a letter he sent to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) urging them to approve a cost recovery framework that spreads the costs across the region.
 - Wright acknowledged the complexity of electricity cost allocation and committed to working with FERC to review the cost-sharing framework, though he reiterated that keeping coal plants open is necessary to prevent blackouts.
- Sen. **Chris Coons** (D-DE) questioned the proposed cuts to the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, nuclear energy research, and the elimination of the Weatherization Assistance Program.
 - Wright clarified that some apparent cuts to nuclear and science budgets were actually reclassifications of funds into new categories, such as AI and baseload power.
- Sen. **Lisa Murkowski** (R-AK) asked that unobligated funds from the Energy Reliability Assurance and Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations programs be prioritized for rural and remote hydropower microgrids in Alaska; Wright agreed to this request.
 - Relatedly, Peters urged the immediate release of frozen infrastructure funds meant for hydroelectric dam safety, citing the ongoing flooding emergency in Northern Michigan. Wright agreed on the critical nature of these assets and promised to expedite funding.
- Sen. **Bill Hagerty** (R-TN) asked how the Genesis Mission and investments in supercomputing at Oak Ridge National Lab would translate to real-world advances.
 - Wright explained that harnessing AI will revolutionize fusion energy, nuclear reactor design, and healthcare. He stressed that the U.S. must beat China in AI and quantum computing to protect national security.
 - Kennedy requested that DOE provide Congress with an explanation of how AI makes energy production more affordable and efficient. Wright responded that AI will reduce operational costs for nuclear reactors, in turn enabling breakthroughs in fusion energy.
- Sen. **John Hoeven** (R-ND) asked for DOE’s support in advancing funding for regional carbon sequestration partnerships that capture carbon for use in enhanced oil recovery. Wright supported the concept as a strong long-term energy strategy and committed to reviewing the specific projects.

- Kennedy acknowledged the difficulties in connecting generation sources to the grid and asked Wright what Congress can do to resolve this issue.
 - Wright blamed previous federal regulations for making it “almost impossible to permit and build new reliable dispatchable generation plants.”
 - To fix interconnection delays, Wright stated DOE needs to leverage AI to speed up grid interconnection studies. He also called for “common sense regulation” to prioritize connecting energy sources that will reliably improve grid operations and bring down prices, alongside an urgent need for more domestic manufacturing of transformers and electrical steel.