

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Alan Grayson (D-FL)
on the Subcommittee on Energy

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Energy
“Department of Energy Oversight: Office of Fossil Energy.”
May 11, 2016

Thank you Chairman Weber and thank you Mr. Smith for testifying today.

Many of my colleagues believe there is a war being waged on coal. There is a strong belief that government policies are driving the shutdown of coal-fired power plants across the country. Yet, the economic data we have, tell us something different. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, natural gas is projected to surpass coal as the leading source of energy for U.S. power generation this year.¹ The so-called “war on coal” has been carried out by the market, not the government.

While this shift to natural gas in the United States has resulted in reduced greenhouse gas emissions, I should remind everyone that although natural gas is a *cleaner* source of fossil energy, it still emits large amounts of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere.

It should be noted that coal and natural gas account for about 65% of U.S. electricity generation, and will likely continue to be a major part of the U.S. energy portfolio, in the decades to come.² Nearly every activity within the Office of Fossil Energy is focused on climate, and other forms of environmental mitigation, yet the Administration is proposing to cut its overall budget.

In order to deliver on emission reduction targets agreed to at COP21 (the Conference of Parties in Paris) and in the future, carbon capture technology may well be needed in the U.S. as well as around the world, particularly in developing countries that rely heavily on their cheapest and most easily attainable source of energy – coal.

In fact, according to the International Energy Agency, the world’s coal consumption is going up, not down. Since the start of the 21st century, coal production has been the fastest-growing global energy source.³

As India enters a period of sustained rapid growth, their demand for cheap coal power generation is surging.⁴ China and Southeast Asia are major consumers of coal and continue to bring on new coal-fired power plants each year.⁵ And African countries still count on fossil fuels for 77% of

¹ <http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=25392>

² Id.

³ <http://www.iea.org/aboutus/faqs/coal/>

⁴ http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/WEB_WorldEnergyOutlook2015ExecutiveSummaryEnglishFinal.pdf

⁵ http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/WEO2015_SouthEastAsia.pdf

their electricity production.⁶

Thus the development of carbon capture technologies is crucial to the worldwide effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The United States can lead this effort to solve this challenging technological problem. We can, and should, capitalize on this unique environmental and economic opportunity.

The Administration's announcement of Mission Innovation gave me high hopes for transforming our energy economy, including the advancement of innovative carbon capture technologies. But looking closer at the details, I believe we fall short of making any significant progress in reducing the environmental impact of fossil fuels. I am hoping that this hearing provides a clearer explanation of the significant cuts within the Office of Fossil Energy's Advanced Energy Systems budget, among other areas. Additionally, I would like to hear how DOE plans to better steward large demonstration and pilot projects going forward. DOE does not have an acceptable track record in this area, and I hope our conversation today can help highlight some of the needed improvements.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

⁶ <http://www.tsp-data-portal.org/Breakdown-of-Electricity-Generation-by-Energy-Source#tspQvChart>