

**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD – 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION**  
**Senate – March 2, 2017**

**NOMINATION OF RICK PERRY TO BE SECRETARY OF ENERGY**

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am strongly opposed to the nomination of Rick Perry to be the Secretary of Energy.

While Governor Perry has a long record of public service, he is the wrong choice to lead the Department of Energy. He does not possess the technical expertise or necessary qualifications. Moreover, his past statements calling for the elimination of the department and questioning the science behind climate change, coupled with his reported lack of understanding about the scope of the Department's responsibilities, call into question his ability to lead an agency that is so critical to our national and economic security.

What Governor Perry learned during this confirmation process is that the Secretary of Energy not only oversees our country's energy initiatives and strategies, but is also the steward of our nation's nuclear weapons stockpile. The National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA, a part of the Department of Energy, ensures the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear weapons. The

NNSA brings together exceptionally dedicated men and women from our armed forces to work alongside some of our best scientists and engineers to provide expert advice in nuclear non-proliferation and counter-terrorism. The Secretary of Energy must understand their work, and advise the president on our nuclear arsenal capabilities and national security issues. Governor Perry has no experience in these areas, and is not qualified to lead the agency tasked with maintaining our nuclear deterrent.

The Department of Energy also protects our nation's security by strengthening the electrical grid's resilience in the face of natural disasters and cyberattacks. Its Office of Electricity works with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and utilities to protect the electrical grid. And yet, the Trump Administration has reportedly proposed eliminating this office, something which Governor Perry has not sought to dispel.

The Department of Energy leads the country, and the world, in renewable energy generation and energy efficiency. For my home

state of Rhode Island, renewable energy from the wind, sun, and ocean is not just a path to local energy production, but also a source of well-paying jobs ranging from steelworkers to scientists. Last year, Rhode Island became the first state to build an offshore wind farm, off the coast of Block Island, proving that offshore wind is a viable renewable energy source for the United States.

This technological feat could not have been accomplished without the science, engineering, and policy research supported by the Office of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency. This office drives the research in wind, solar, geothermal, and ocean energy that has made affordable renewable energy a reality. However, Governor Perry, in his written responses, refused to comment on reports that the administration would cut funding, or even worse, eliminate this vital department. Failure to invest in this department and its research risks our future as an energy-producing nation.

We need a Secretary of Energy who also can effectively manage the Office of Science and the

National Laboratories, programs that have made the United States a global leader in scientific advancement since the Manhattan project. The National Laboratory system hosts equipment that no university or company could dream of building but that are vital to expanding our knowledge base and technological advancement such as particle accelerators, supercomputers, and laser ignition facilities.

The future of many of these energy science programs in the new administration is of great concern to the scientific community. The same budget recommendations that would eliminate the Office of Electricity also showed plans to cut supercomputing research, even as China is making large investments to become the world leader in this area. Advanced computing is vital to national defense and economic competitiveness. Shortsighted budget cuts here, or in any of our basic research programs, threaten our nation's future security and prosperity. Governor Perry has not pledged to protect or prioritize any of these programs. The Department of Energy's leadership in

atmospheric science and climate change is also threatened. The Trump Administration has gone beyond merely ignoring the threat of climate change; it has proposed cutting off funding to the critical programs that monitor our planet. It has also cast doubt that climate data will be accessible and available to the public and other researchers. We have already seen an unprecedented attempt by the Trump transition team to collect the names of scientists who study the consequences of carbon dioxide emissions. It appears that for the first time in the history of the agency, its scientists are worried that honestly reporting data may be a career-ending decision. This is an alarming assault on the integrity of American science. The Secretary of Energy must be someone who understands science and will protect the government scientists who work in the national interests. The Secretary must understand and be able to present to the President the overwhelming scientific consensus that the climate is changing, and that human activities are responsible. All Governor Perry committed to do in this and

other areas is to learn more about the science.

This is not sufficient.

We have been fortunate that recent occupants of this post were not learning basic science on the job. Both Presidents Bush and Obama filled this post with experts possessing a deep understanding of science and technological issues. President Bush appointed Dr. Samuel Bodman, who served as a member of MIT's faculty before moving into business and government. President Obama appointed a Nobel prize winner in physics, Dr. Steven Chu, and a MIT physicist, Dr. Ernest Moniz. The result is that for the past 12 years, the Department of Energy has been well equipped to respond to challenges in national security, energy, and science.

We need a Secretary of Energy who can build on that legacy. We need a Secretary of Energy who has the technical expertise to oversee our nation's nuclear stockpile, the integrity to protect basic science from political attacks, and the willingness to fight for a secure grid and renewable energy technology. I am not

convinced that Governor  
Perry has those  
qualifications.

For these reasons, I cannot  
support his nomination.  
And I urge my colleagues to  
join me in voting NO.