

White House Fusion Energy Summit

March 23 (EIRNS)—In a Fact Sheet issued March 15, The Biden-Harris Administration announced a “bold decadal vision” to accelerate viable fusion energy. [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2022/03/15/fact-sheet-developing-a-bold-vision-for-commercial-fusion-energy/>]

As one of the steps to accomplish this, on March 17 (St. Patrick’s Day), the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) convened a 3-hour summit with 25 speakers on “Developing a Bold Decadal Vision for Commercial Fusion Energy,” to “initiate discussions exploring the promise of fusion technology and the remaining challenges,” for the purpose of “informing the development of a strategy to accelerate the realization of commercial fusion.”

The development of commercial fusion energy, however, is being promoted in the context of the “Biden-Harris”—that’s the way the White House Fact Sheet puts it—Administration’s green agenda of divesting of fossil fuels in favor of a “clean energy future.”

The bulk of the Opening Remarks were taken up by various government bureaucrats babbling on about the nonsensical need to decarbonize as the way to somehow influence Earth’s ever-changing climate, etc. Alondra Nelson, head of OSTP; Jennifer Granholm, Sec. of Energy; Gina McCarthy, National Climate Advisor (working under John Kerry); and Brenda Mallory, Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality all contributed to the display of embarrassment to sanity.

But then two members of the House Fusion Energy Caucus spoke on the need for 14/7 baseline energy. While not so bold as to directly attack the Green New Deal, Chairman of the Caucus, Don Beyer (D-VA) remarked that the universe has three trillion galaxies with hundreds of trillions of stars, all powered by fusion. All renewable energy comes from the Sun. We need a Sun on Earth, he said. Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), in whose District is located the Oak Ridge National Lab, promoted a crash program to develop fusion, similar to the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb. He said he was all for fission and fusion.

A 5-minute video was shown summarizing the DOE's (slow) progress toward fusion.

Panel 1 on the "Status and Benefits of Fusion Technology," featured, among others, Kathy McCarthy, Assoc. Lab Dir. for Fusion & Fusion Energy & Science at Oak Ridge National Lab; and Steven Cowley, Dir., Princeton Plasma Physics Lab. These actual scientists reviewed the gains made since 2021, referencing the National Ignition Facility's achievement of 1.3 megajoules output with a 1.9 megajoules input (not quite breakeven, but close); the 10 megawatts for 5 seconds from the Joint European Torus (JET) in England; and the 20 Tesla achieved by Commonwealth Fusion Systems using High Temperature Superconductors.

In Panel 2, "Fusion Industry Vision," various corporate executives from such companies as Heleon, Commonwealth Fusion Systems, and TAE, concurred that if the National Labs, the universities, and the private companies worked together, like they did in the World War II era Manhattan Project and Apollo space program (1961-1975) fusion could be brought online in the next 10 years.

In the Closing Remarks, the discussion once again returned to the world of fluff, with federal officials now holding forth about the need for Diversity, Equity, and inclusion to make sure the workforce in fusion reflects the population: black females, Hispanics, etc. The best way to achieve diversity, of course, would be to vastly upgrade the quality of teaching and learning environment in all nation's public schools, four-year colleges, two-year community colleges, and graduate schools, making sure every child who enters the workforce is classically educated.

To locate all of this geopolitically, Russia and China got one brief mention each. That to Russia came in conjunction with the only reference to the fundamental concept of energy-density, made by Geraldine Richmond, Under Sec. for Science and Innovation, at the DOE, who said that the fusion fuel in a bathtub has as much energy as the 10 million barrels of oil a day produced by Russia. And someone, with an implicit reference to China, said, "If we don't do it (that is, achieve fusion first), somebody else (hint, hint China) will."

Future workshops in the upcoming months will be held. A YouTube video on the summit is available on the White House YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTtBeF75Yhc>