OPENING STATEMENT
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NOMINATION HEARING
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, distinguished Members of the Committee, and staff: Thank you for this opportunity and your interest and leadership on energy matters.

It is an honor to be the President's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the Department of Energy. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee, Secretary Perry, and the dedicated workforce at the Department serving the American people.

Joining me for the hearing are my family and friends, without whom I would not be here today: my wife, Laura Simmons, my inspiration for public service as she has followed in her father's footsteps in working for the State Department; children Weston age 4, and Vivian age 3. Also joining me today is my father from Utah and my mother is watching online. My parents couldn't have known that when they built the house where I grew up that decision to make it a a passive solar double envelope home would spark my lifelong interest in this area. I am grateful for my parents for stressing the importance of education and learning, as my mother was a Kindergarten teacher and my father is a college professor.

For the last year I have been the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in EERE and for a time, the Acting Assistant Secretary. It has been a great job and only reinforced my desire to lead this office and serve to fulfill its mission.

One of the best parts of the job has been visiting a number of the National Labs. In the last year I have visited NREL, PNNL, Oak Ridge, Argonne, Sandia, and INL. These trips have been educational and inspirational. The best part visiting the National Labs is talking to the researchers and seeing the excitement they have for their work—from advanced hydro power and the electric grid of tomorrow at PNNL, to innovative solid state heating and cooling solutions at Oak Ridge, to Sandia's solar tower and semiconductor foundry, to the next-generation battery work at Argonne.

And of course, I'm not forgetting about NREL—the first lab I visited after joining EERE. EERE is the steward for NREL, which is at the cutting edge of many renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. At the most recent EERE All Hands meeting, NREL Director Martin Keller addressed EERE staff and talked about the innovative work NREL is doing for EERE and NREL's vision for the future. The National Labs are truly important assets, and it has been my honor to serve alongside the dedicated men and women who work in DOE's National Labs.

Since becoming Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, I have approached this job with an open mind and an eagerness to learn, and have focused on following congressional direction while advancing the administration's priorities. I commend EERE staff for their work to execute on the appropriations that Congress has given EERE. Since the omnibus bill became law, EERE has announced over $670 million in

financial assistance, in addition to continued funding of our National Labs in line with FY18 appropriations. I understand the Department is on track to get the weatherization funding.

As we look to the future, I think there are three things that are critical for the success of the technologies in EERE's portfolio. First, we will continue to work to reduce the cost of these technologies. We have seen large cost decreases for photovoltaic solar and onshore wind, for example, but we haven't seen the same magnitude of reductions in other technologies.

Second, the price reduction in wind and solar is leading to increasing amounts of these variable resources on the grid. It is critical, therefore, that we are working to improve grid integration to increase the flexibility of these and other resources. One important area here is working with the Advanced Manufacturing Office on improved power electronics. Advanced power electronics enable wind and solar to contribute in a much more significant way to grid reliability and resilience. Also, it is critical that EERE works with the Office of Electricity and the other energy offices through the Grid Modernization Initiative on technologies to support a more reliable, resilient, and diverse electric grid.

Third, is energy storage. The Office of Electricity conducts important research on grid-scale batteries. EERE also works on energy storage, from next-generation battery technologies for electric vehicles, to energy-efficient, grid-connected building technologies (as I testified on before this Committee last fall), to pumped storage hydro, which is currently the largest source of energy storage on the electric grid today. We also work on EERE's Hydrogen at Scale program, which examines ways to generate, store, and use hydrogen for a variety of applications, from transportation to industrial processes. I believe that we need a portfolio approach to storage that allows us to think about energy storage as broadly as possible.

I have spent the last 20 years working on energy and environmental issues. My mindset has always been to work toward affordable and reliable energy. I believe that affordable energy is crucial for all Americans, but especially for low and middle income families.

I am grateful for the opportunity I had leading EERE to work toward advancing renewable energy technologies and improving energy efficiency. If confirmed, I will work to further advance these technologies to develop a more abundant, reliable, clean, and diverse energy system than ever before.

Members of the Committee, I wish to thank you again for allowing me to be here today. It is indeed an honor to come before the committee, and I ask for your favorable consideration of the President's nomination. I look forward to hearing your questions.