

Chairman Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
Budget Hearing on National Nuclear Security Administration Weapons Activities Program
February 14, 2013
Opening Statement As Prepared

The hearing will come to order.

I'd like to begin by welcoming our new Ranking Member, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur from the great state of Ohio, to the subcommittee. She is a good friend and I look forward to working with her to provide a balanced and bipartisan oversight of the agencies under our jurisdiction over the next two years.

I'd also like to welcome two new faces, and one familiar face, back to the subcommittee. Mr. Calvert, it's good to have you back. Judge Carter, Mr. Fleischmann, welcome.

We are opening this hearing season examining Nuclear Weapons programs run by the Department of Energy, a fitting start given the critical importance of these activities.

While I generally prefer to begin our hearings season by inviting the Secretary to give an overview of the budget request, there is, as yet, no budget request to discuss.

That puts us in a difficult position. It is our charge to develop responsible appropriations bills each year. This takes time. When the budget request is delayed, we have less time to analyze and debate our bills in full committee and on the Floor in regular order. Unfortunately, the budget request this year may be a month delayed...or even later.

With each day it's late, the chances increase that we are forced into another CR. And that is precisely what I, and all of us on this panel, want to avoid. Continuing Resolutions reduce the ability of Congress to oversee taxpayer dollars and the Administration to make the wiser choices with public funding.

And so I welcome our witnesses before us today to discuss the programs funded from the Weapons Activities account. The Honorable Neile Miller, Acting Administrator for NNSA, welcome. You worked at the Office of Management and Budget, and in a number of key positions within DOE, and by all accounts have been responsible for many positive management changes. Dr. Cook, welcome back. And Colonel Dawkins, welcome to you.

It should be apparent by now how important Weapons Activities is to this subcommittee. The reliability, safety and security of our nuclear deterrent is, to my mind, the single most critical responsibility of this subcommittee and the Department. In fact, this is the only account under our jurisdiction which gets a funding anomaly under the CR. And these anomalies don't appear out of thin-air. Increases to the NNSA budget are only available because we cut national security funding elsewhere. This is truly a zero-sum game, and the pot is getting smaller over time.

Just how small a pot is growing painfully clear. Once sequestration is implemented, Weapons Activities programs for fiscal year 2013 account will be cut \$557 million, to just over \$7 billion – approximately the same level as fiscal year 2011. And next year would be even bleaker. These budget cuts may, and probably will, have serious impacts on our national security. Unfortunately, as is the case with the sequester cuts across government, no one is yet sure, since these cuts were done without an eye to their effects.

And, at a time when North Korea and Iran have their own nuclear ambitions, and most of our allies are spending less on defense.

We have worked hard to constructively guide, in a bipartisan manner, the NNSA in its work over the years, and we have seen some improvements in transparency and the NNSA's working relationship with the Department of Defense.

However, old challenges persist, such as problems with project management, contractor oversight, and security at our sites. We plan on having in-depth hearings on construction management and site security later this spring, but I hope that today we will be able to get an update on initiatives you have taken to address these problems.

You will also be facing questions on how the Continuing Resolution and the impending sequestration may impact your programs, your dedicated workforce and the communities that support them. We must understand these impacts if we are to understand how to develop a budget for FY14.

While we have sustained funding, we have done so without the benefit of comprehensive planning we require to understand your overall work. I suspect that you will continue to ask for funding increases, but without the insight that these documents provide, we, and the public at large, will have less confidence in your ability to administer billions of dollars. This is unacceptable for an institution with a mandate as important as yours, and we will expect your assurances that you will provide us the documents we respectfully requested.

Once again, welcome to our witnesses, and I'll turn to the Ranking Member for any comments she may have.

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