

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Tim Murphy
Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
“DOE for the 21st Century: Science, Environment, and National Security Missions”
February 24, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today, we will begin to examine how well the Department is prepared to meet its responsibilities for the 21st Century. This includes what is necessary to enhance the performance of the department's national laboratory system – which harbors the technological tools and know-how for advancing our nuclear security as well as the nation's edge in important science, energy, and environmental missions.

Indeed, a strong national laboratory system, well managed and overseen, increases the prospects for strong DOE mission performance across the board. I know from my own experience with the National Energy Technology Laboratory, located in my district, which has developed carbon capture storage technology that has allowed the nation to achieve its lowest carbon emissions rates in over two decades, the essential role our national laboratories can play to meet the nation's needs.

When it comes to the various missions for DOE none surpass in importance the department's critical responsibility for maintaining the nation's nuclear deterrent and technological superiority on all aspects of nuclear security.

This morning, we will hear why enhancing and sustaining U.S. nuclear and technological leadership is vital for confronting the complex challenges of the dangerous age we live in— with potential adversaries modernizing their nuclear arsenals; with threats of Iran, other nation-states; with emerging new nuclear technologies and proliferation risks.

Unfortunately, we will also hear that efforts to place DOE's nuclear security operations on a sustainable track have been coming up short for decades. Part of the problem has been the complicated relationships through which DOE pursues its various missions: most of its work is performed by contractors at the national laboratories and production sites.

The benefit of this contracting approach is that it harnesses the best scientific, engineering, and management expertise of industry and academia; the downside is that it creates difficult oversight and accountability requirements—from DOE headquarters to the site offices, to the contractor management, to the operators in the field. In our hearing last summer on a radiological incident that began at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, we saw a vivid example of how oversight and contractor accountability breakdowns lead to a costly, 500 million dollar incident.

The most dramatic effort to address the management problems in the nuclear weapons complex occurred in late 1999. Congress, in reaction to serious security, project management and safety issues, created the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) as a semi-autonomous agency within DOE aimed at focusing on mission oversight to improve mission performance. Yet the new agency did not improve oversight or accountability. In some respects, the complexity increased, with more offices, more audits, more lines of reporting— increasing costs, obscuring communications, confusing decision-making accountability.

Problems persisted—billion dollar cost overruns; delayed and cancelled projects; deferred maintenance; serious safety and security mishaps; and oversight failures at the Department, site office, and contractor level—all documented in this committee's oversight.

Three years ago, in the wake of across-the-board oversight failures at NNSA's Y-12 site, Congress created the Congressional Advisory Panel on the Governance of the Nuclear Security Enterprise. The independent, bi-partisan panel examined and made recommendations concerning the management of NNSA's nuclear operations and alternative governance models.

Let me quote the panel's diagnosis, released just over a year ago:

"One unmistakable conclusion is that NNSA governance reform, at least as it has been implemented, has failed to provide the effective, mission-focused enterprise that Congress intended. The necessary fixes will not be simple or quick, and they must address systemic problems in both management practices and culture that exist across the nuclear enterprise."

That panel said the lack of sustained leadership focus on the nuclear security mission contributes to virtually all the observed problems. Other problems contributing to the failures included: Overlapping DOE and NNSA headquarters staffs and blurred ownership and accountability for the nuclear enterprise missions; and dysfunctional relationships between line managers and mission-support staffs and between the government and its contractors, operating the sites—all issues familiar to this committee.

Today's hearing will focus on the path to position DOE to take on its critical nuclear security responsibilities. A key element is to examine how to strengthen—and sustain— Cabinet secretary's ownership of the nuclear security mission and reduce bureaucratic overlap.

We have four distinguished witnesses who can outline the roadmap for reform: the co-chairmen of the Congressional Advisory Panel, who can explain what is necessary to cut a path forward to clarify roles, responsibilities and accountability, reduce duplicative offices, and improve the nuclear security mission.

We will also hear from the co-chairman of the congressionally chartered Commission to Review the Effectiveness of the National Energy Laboratories. This Commission, which released its comprehensive report this past October, identifies challenges across DOE's laboratory system that related to oversight, micro-management, and related problems we see most visibly in the nuclear weapons programs.

In many respects, the thoughtful recommendations from these panels complement each other, and can serve this committee as a guide for identifying what is necessary to address DOE governance and management shortcomings going forward.

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