

**Opening Statement of the Honorable John Shimkus
Subcommittees on Energy and Power, Environment and the Economy
Hearing on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's FY 2017 Budget
April 20, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Nuclear energy is and must remain a central component to our nation's electricity mix. The NRC's role overseeing civilian nuclear power reactors serves to ensure that nuclear energy will remain an integral part of our energy future. Thank you all for being here.

I would like to add a special thanks to Commissioner Bill Ostendorff for his service on the Commission. This will be his last appearance before this Committee as a Commissioner. I appreciate Commissioner Ostendorff's willingness to speak up on the need for the Federal government to fulfill its obligation to dispose of spent nuclear fuel. You will be an invaluable asset to your alma mater, the United States Naval Academy, as a Distinguished Visiting Professor of National Security. The next generation of military leaders will greatly benefit from your deep knowledge and expertise on national security issues. Good luck.

My home state of Illinois generates the most nuclear energy in the nation. Nuclear energy is a major contributor to Illinois' economic well-being and must remain so. Our reliance on nuclear power plants also means my constituents and ratepayers throughout the state provide more funding to the NRC than any other state. Therefore, the agency's efforts to right-size the organization and streamline efficiency are of great importance to me and my constituents.

This morning we will examine the NRC's Fiscal Year 2017 budget request. I appreciate the initial steps the Commission has taken to reduce its budget to date, but the budget reductions thus far are inadequate. Yesterday, the House Appropriations Committee considered its Energy & Water Appropriations bill for the upcoming fiscal year and I support Chairman Simpson's funding level for the NRC of \$936 million, including \$20 million from the Nuclear Waste Fund for Yucca Mountain activities. This committee will continue to provide close oversight of the Commission to find further opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce the budget. Let me also be clear, these efforts will not compromise the safety of our nuclear power plants nor will they prevent the NRC from fulfilling its mission to protect public health and safety.

Last Wednesday, the Commission approved an additional \$30 million in reductions through re-baselining and prioritization efforts. I hope that the additional reduction in workload and responsibilities will translate to a tangible reduction of NRC staff. However, just because the Commission has voted on these recommendations, Project Aim 2020 is not complete. As the Commission stated, "it is important that the completion of the re-baselining effort and the other Project Aim tasks be viewed by the NRC staff and stakeholders as the beginning and not the end in our goal to be better positioned to respond to the challenges of 2020 and beyond."

I would be remiss if I didn't express my dissatisfaction that once more the Commission failed to include funding to continue consideration of the Yucca Mountain's license application. This Congress I have held a series of hearings to examine different issues associated with developing a comprehensive solution to disposal of used fuel. I will continue to advocate for a bipartisan solution that must include Yucca Mountain.

This Committee has been persistent in its oversight to assure that NRC complies with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. The courts directed the NRC to spend previously appropriated Nuclear Waste Fund money and I understand that funding will be nearly exhausted by the end

of this fiscal year. I hope you are taking all necessary steps to maintain the necessary expertise and infrastructure to continue consideration of the Yucca Mountain License Application.

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