



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
DEMOCRATS  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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## **Pallone Opening Remarks at NRC Budget Hearing**

**Washington, DC** – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks today at a Subcommittees on Energy & Environment hearing on “Fiscal Year 2019 Nuclear Regulatory Commission Budget:”*

I want to thank the Subcommittee Chairmen and Ranking Members for holding this Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversight hearing on the President’s budget proposal. I welcome Chairman Svinicki and Commissioner Burns, and I am particularly pleased to welcome back to the Committee a distinguished former member of the Democratic staff, Commissioner Jeff Baran.

Last year, I opposed Secretary Perry’s notice of proposed rulemaking to FERC that would have undermined functioning electricity markets by tipping them in favor of nuclear and coal. Despite that opposition, I continue to believe that a safe, efficient and modern nuclear fleet should be an important part of our nation’s effort to combat climate change.

However, nuclear power and technology still have challenges to overcome. For existing units, it’s critical that they be able to meet the safety needs of a post-Fukushima world, the security challenges of a post-9/11 world, and the financial requirements of a market with some of the lowest natural gas and renewable prices in history. These price pressures are contributing to the early closure of units across the country, such as the accelerated shutdown of the Oyster Creek facility in New Jersey. While Oyster Creek is very old and was due to close soon anyway, there are also newer plants capable of many more years of production that are threatened for closure because of these economic pressures.

As a result, many states are taking action or formally considering action to preserve the operation of their nuclear plants. The fate of these plants is up to the companies who own them, the governors and legislatures of those states, and the courts. Those are the proper venues and players to make those decisions, not FERC.

Meanwhile, advancements in nuclear technology, particularly in the area of small modular reactors, hold the possibility of a newer, safer generation of nuclear power, and I support the

work that companies like New Jersey's Holtec are doing in this area. The test for the industry is to show that such units can be brought online in a timely and cost effective manner -- a question that continues to remain unanswered.

We also still need to address the storage and disposal of nuclear waste and the rapidly accelerating phenomenon of decommissioned units. The legislation authored by Chairman Shimkus that was overwhelmingly reported out of this committee last year is an important step toward dealing with that issue. I hope to see it on the House floor in the near future.

I believe there is an important role for nuclear energy to play in addressing global climate change, but I want to make perfectly clear that safety must come first. This is a critical moment in time for the nuclear industry and its regulators. I commend the Commission for its ongoing efforts to adapt the size and structure of the NRC to today's regulatory realities. However, it is critical we ensure that the Commission has the staff and resources it needs, not just to carry out its mission, but to carry it out well. The job of the Commission is to regulate nuclear power for the benefit of all Americans, not just one industry or sector, so we must work together to find a way forward for nuclear energy without sacrificing safeguards.

Again, I want to thank the Commissioners for coming today and I look forward to hearing the testimony. I yield the remainder of my time.

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