

**Republican Leader Fred Upton
“Keeping Us Safe and Secure:
Oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission”**

July 14, 2021

As prepared for delivery

It has been a few years since we’ve heard directly from the Commission.

For two of you—Chairman Hanson and Commissioner Wright-- this is the first time before the Committee as Commissioners, so welcome. And welcome back Commissioner Baran. As a former Committee staffer, you understand our long interest in effective nuclear policies.

Today’s hearing offers the chance to hear how the NRC is right-sizing and adapting to changing industry dynamics and technologies and improving its own performance. This hearing should allow us to discuss your approach to regulating. It should allow us to hear an update on the agency’s budget, its work to implement new statutory directives, and its work to transform itself to meet future challenges.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s focus on assuring adequate safety of radiological materials serves a key role in shaping our nuclear future. Its mission to provide reasonable assurance of safety and security is critical to building the public trust in nuclear technologies.

I’ve seen the good results of NRC’s work. There are three nuclear power reactors in my district, two at the D.C. Cook Nuclear Power Plant, just south of my home town of St. Joseph and one at the Palisades Nuclear Plant, just to the north. All the men and women at these sites, the engineers, electricians, and the professional security workforce, help provide clean electricity for thousands of Michigan households. Their dedication to their work and the positive impacts on the surrounding communities is commendable.

They have shown the community value of nuclear power—and demonstrated safe, productive operations. When you consider the amazing benefits of clean, reliable nuclear power. When you think about the quality of work, the pride in communities that nuclear produces, it is disheartening to watch what is happening to the nation’s operating fleet.

There are now 93 operating reactors, down from 104 a decade ago, with several more to close soon, including Palisades. Electricity market structures, renewable tax subsidies, abundant natural gas, and relatively stable energy demand produced unprecedented economic impacts on nuclear power generation.

The negative effects of this are happening—and even impacting NRC—just as a new class of advanced reactors is emerging on the horizon. These are challenging times. And NRC has to meet them.

Shortly before our last hearing with the Commission, the NRC’s Executive Director of Operations initiated [a “transformation” effort](#) building on other recent reforms that has led to ongoing work to improve its performance. By the end of 2018, the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act also was enacted into law, which required NRC fee reforms and a steady push for the development of a new advanced reactor regulatory framework.

I’d like to know how these efforts are playing out—and what you think the end result should look like. What we want is a nimble agency that ensures its procedures do not become impediments to a robust industry, and our energy and national security interests.

During my time as Full Committee Chairman, we dealt with some contentious NRC regulatory issues and would focus on NRC’s Principles of Good Regulation to guide our oversight. Those principles remain as clear a guide as ever for what should be expected of the agency as it develops policies to assure safety.

We can talk about what these mean during the hearing, but I think it is crucial the agency, under your leadership, focus on these principles as you update management and regulatory activities. This will benefit taxpayers, rate-payers, licensees and the public. I look forward to the discussion. Yield back.

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