

Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Energy Subcommittee Hearing: “American Nuclear Energy
Expansion: Powering a Clean and Secure Future”

April 18, 2023

As prepared for delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

American leadership in nuclear energy and nuclear technology is critical to our economic security and our national security.

It must be part of a strong energy mix.

It’s how we win the future with clean, reliable, and affordable energy to power our way of life... keep the lights on... build stronger communities... and keep our economies going.

Many of us just returned from Europe... where we heard a lot about the scary realities of shutting down nuclear energy.

Putin is weaponizing Europe’s reliance on Russian natural gas.

As he shuts down gas supplies.... countries have been forced to scramble to secure their energy supplies, keep their economies running, and energy affordable.

Germany—which just completed its phase out of its nuclear power plants this weekend – is especially in crisis.

Since Putin began cutting supplies..., electricity prices have skyrocketed...

... the government has asked citizens to ration energy... and as reported by NPR, Germany is even stocking up on candles to prepare for blackouts.

Without reliable sources of energy like nuclear... Germany’s security is weakened, and it is returning to the dark ages.

Just yesterday, we participated in a signing ceremony for an agreement between the United States and Poland in conjunction with GE-Hitachi’s small modular reactor deployment.

It was inspiring to see all the excitement in Poland for this nuclear deal, and another one for the three large nuclear reactors and potentially three more.

Poland’s leaders, like so many of us in Congress, understand and appreciate the reliable and secure energy that comes from nuclear.

They are looking at other American nuclear technologies like NuScale's VOYGR (pronounced Voyager) reactors.

Not only is this an indication of a strong U.S.-Poland relationship, it shows that nuclear energy must be a key part of our future.

America—not Russia or China-- must lead to restore and expand our leadership in nuclear energy.

And, we must do it by unleashing our unmatched genius for innovation...

.... by assuring a predictable regulatory landscape to help attract investment and support decisions to expand nuclear deployment

... and by encouraging new technologies that will provide exciting new nuclear applications, such as providing power and heat for industrial uses.

Our central question today is what does it take to assure a healthy existing nuclear fleet and deploy the promising new innovations?

What does it take to be sure we have the nuclear infrastructure and fuels for our fleet and advanced reactors?

And what does it take to assure America can lead the world on nuclear and nuclear innovation?

Sixty-nine years ago, Congress enacted the essential policies that can guide safe nuclear development in the United States and export abroad.

The Atomic Energy Act of 1954 encouraged the widespread use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, consistent with ensuring our common defense and public health and safety.

With that policy, we led the world for several decades in developing civilian nuclear technologies and set the standard for safety.

We must continue to build on this leadership to bolster our long-term nuclear competitive edge and strategic interests.

If we don't lead, China and Russia will.

China and Russia combined have already announced plans to construct an estimated 66 reactors in multiple nations.

They are also working more closely on nuclear technologies, which raises more serious security concerns.

America has also witnessed a weakening of our nuclear fuel infrastructure, building an unhealthy reliance on Russian-sourced nuclear fuels—a security problem intensified by the Ukraine Invasion.

What does it take to increase our own secure supplies?

What does it take to enjoy the economic benefits of a domestic nuclear infrastructure?

Despite Germany's poor decisions, other European nations...like as I mentioned in Poland.... are looking at American technologies.

Closer to home, I've been following the work of Energy Northwest with innovative companies like X-energy.

This work holds great promise for Eastern Washington... one of the early leaders in deploying nuclear technology... to once again lead in advanced nuclear generation.

This is encouraging for a brighter and strong future.

This hearing is a solid first step for the Committee, in a strong bipartisan way, to update the nation's regulatory policies that are necessary to restore American nuclear leadership...

..and to advance clean and secure energy here and around the world.

I look forward to the suggestions for how best to do this that the Committee is collecting from nuclear energy stakeholders, including from our panel of witnesses today.

I appreciate Ranking Member Pallone and Ranking Member DeGette joining us in asking these important questions and exploring potential reforms.

Let's get to work, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.