

Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers
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Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security
“Oversight of NRC: Ensuring Efficient and Predictable Safety
Regulation for a Prosperous America”
As prepared for delivery

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

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

American leadership has been essential to civilian nuclear energy around the world.

We can trace this to the vision Congress established in the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, which stated in part, and I quote,

“to make the maximum contribution to the general welfare...the development, use, and control of atomic energy shall be directed so as to promote world peace...

“...improve general welfare, increase the standard of living...

“...and strengthen free competition and private enterprise.”

With that policy, the United States led the world for over forty years developing civilian nuclear technologies.

We set the standard for safety and security that continues to this day.

You can find American know-how in more than 80% of the nuclear reactors deployed around the world...

These reactors trace to innovations by American companies that were spread by Congress's vision for what nuclear can provide.

That is the vision of nuclear leadership we are working to restore during this Congress.

The world today presents serious challenges to American nuclear leadership.

China and Russia seek to dominate emerging nuclear markets to control supply chains for technology and fuels.

Here at home, nuclear generating capacity has been nearly flat for three decades.

We can reverse this trend. But there's work to do.

For example, Congress enacted incentives for a resurgent nuclear industry in 2005, and by 2009 the NRC had received 18 applications for 28 new, state of the art reactors.

To its credit, NRC issued licenses for the construction and operation of 14 new reactors over the following 9 years.

Yet for a variety of reasons only two of those projects have been constructed—at plant Vogtle in Georgia.

The remaining licenses were terminated or on indefinite hold by the applicants.

And so today, NRC operates as an agency that has overseen the completion of only two reactors from start to finish over the last forty years.

To restore American nuclear leadership, we need an NRC that performs its mission with the urgency reflected in the Atomic Energy Act.

NRC must focus on “providing reasonable assurance of adequate protection of public health and safety”—that is its core mission. I agree with NRC Chairman Hanson that “NRC must do its best not to be an impediment to innovation and deployment.”

We need a modern regulator that works in service to the policies established by Congress.

There is no time to waste.

America has the best operating fleet in the world. The performance and safety of American nuclear plants are unmatched.

There are many promising, advanced nuclear technologies coming to the doorstep of NRC for licensing.

Our allies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere yearn for American technology and support.

We heard this when we were in Poland and the Czech Republic earlier this year.

Our allies seek American leadership on safety and performance.

We need an NRC that encourages innovation.

Key questions for this hearing concern how the Commission plans to modernize and meet the urgency of the moment.

- Will it update its regulations to account for the best available data and operational experience?
- Where's the urgency in enabling innovations that will improve efficiency of operations, oversight, and safety?
- Where's the urgency to implement the reforms directed by Congress to establish predictable, clear regulations appropriate to the risks of the technologies it licenses?
- And is NRC a results-driven agency?

I look forward to hearing answers to these questions and the discussion this morning and yield back.