

Chairman Robert Latta
Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Energy
“American Energy Dominance: Dawn of the New Nuclear Era”
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Today’s hearing will examine the current state of the nuclear industry, the emerging prospects for the rapid and widespread deployment of new nuclear technologies, and what more may be done to enable success.

The importance of successful growth of the American nuclear energy cannot be understated.

For one thing, we need it for energy.

We need firm, reliable power, versatile power, and a lot more of it. We need power for emerging industrial output and the AI race—also for homes and businesses.

A robust and growing nuclear industry also strengthens our national security. It does so through increased nuclear commerce with allies and through a more cost-effective industrial base.

Congress has already taken significant steps that will optimize the regulatory system and related policies to assist in domestic nuclear deployment.

The ADVANCE Act, major provisions of which were developed by Energy and Commerce Members, focused on licensing efficiency, reducing costs, and increasing predictability in Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) licensing.

It also provided for improved coordination among agencies and increasing access to nuclear technology for our allies. It increased the ability of allies to invest in American nuclear projects.

Congress also enacted legislation to secure nuclear fuel supplies.

It did so by providing funding to jump start work to develop advanced fuels and banning Russian fuels to create the market conditions that will incentivize new domestic fuel capacity.

This legislative work builds upon other legislative measures concerning federal loan and credit programs, nuclear demonstrations, and technical support, and long-term liability protections for nuclear reactors.

Congress has established a strong framework for nuclear development for coming decades. How this is being implemented will be an important topic for this hearing.

By any measure, the prospects of expanded nuclear in the United States have been improving dramatically in recent years.

Consider that only five or six years ago, we were confronting a wave of nuclear retirements. Today, closed nuclear reactors are being restarted, utilities are seeking to produce more power at existing sites.

Just Monday, NRC for the first time approved replacement of analog safety equipment with digital controls—which paves the way for modernizing safety controls across the fleet. This action, finally taken after years of regulatory churn, creates a template for other plants to seek NRC approval of digitization.

There is growing interest in new builds for the large Westinghouse AP1000—the advanced light-water reactor brought on-line at Plant Vogtle [VOHGUL] in Georgia.

And a growing number of advanced nuclear technologies are moving into or through the licensing pipeline.

Major new players, including manufacturers, are providing support and financing for new projects.

The Trump Administration, meanwhile, is also working to advance nuclear on a number of fronts.

It is accelerating regulatory reforms—consistent with the ADVANCE Act—for more efficient, risk-informed licensing. It is working to bring in more foreign investment, accelerate innovative new technology demonstrations, and develop small reactors for military bases.

How this is going and how it can work more effectively will also be a useful focus for this hearing.

Our witnesses today will provide important perspective to help us assess what more may be necessary to ensure success.

Maria Korsnick, President and CEO of the Nuclear Energy Institute, a nuclear engineer, former chief nuclear officer and plant operator, will offer the broad industry view for what is necessary for advancing nuclear.

John Williams, Senior Vice President of Southern Nuclear Operating Company, among other experience overseeing nuclear operations brings the perspective of having overseen the construction and operation of the first new nuclear units in 30 years.

Judi Greenwald, President and CEO of the Nuclear Innovation Alliance, will offer the views of a leading Washington nuclear policy organization, which informed some of our work on the ADVANCE Act.

And, finally, John Wagner, Director of Idaho National Laboratory, will provide the perspective of the National Lab responsible for a substantial amount of nuclear research and development and what he sees across the landscape of nuclear policy today.

The success of our work in Congress to advance durable nuclear deployment will depend on appropriate and efficient regulatory decisions, dependable supply chains and fuels, predictable construction and deployment costs, and, of course, market demand.

This hearing can help us in our work.