

April 22, 2026

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Energy Subcommittee Chairman Robert E**

Subcommittee on Energy Hearing:

**“Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Oversight of its Activities,
Priorities, and Fiscal Year 2027 Budget”**

Good morning and welcome to today’s hearing. We welcome Chairman Nieh (**KNEE**) and the commissioners. It has been three years since we had the full Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) before the Committee, and much has happened.

The energy landscape has been changing during this period.

We need more power for emerging industrial output and the AI race—as well as for a more robust, reliable grid.

We need dispatchable, reliable power, and a lot more of it.

Successful deployment of nuclear technologies promises to help meet future energy demand, as well as assist in a range of other applications beneficial to society.

Expanding nuclear deployment also promises to strengthen our national security, by increasing nuclear commerce with allies and supporting a more cost-effective nuclear industrial base.

Of course, success depends on many factors beyond NRC. However, success will rest on a regulatory system that will efficiently provide reasonable assurance that health and safety are adequately protected.

Two years ago, Congress took significant steps to optimize NRC’s regulatory system so that it could more effectively and efficiently carry out its vital work while enabling large scale nuclear deployment.

At the time, there was significant frustration that the agency was not up to the task.

For example, NRC staff in 2023 failed to produce a new regulatory framework that was workable for advanced reactors, and the staff knew nuclear applicants would not use it.

Energy and Commerce members joined twenty Senators in a bipartisan letter to the Commission asking NRC to go back to the drawing board.

We were concerned NRC was losing sight of its true mission.

This concern resulted in the ADVANCE Act, which focused on licensing efficiency, reducing costs, and increasing predictability in NRC licensing.

It also focused on aligning NRC’s mission so that it could do its work in service to a goal of fully achieving the benefits of nuclear energy.

With the ADVANCE Act, Congress provided NRC the clear direction and tools to establish a strong licensing framework for nuclear development for coming decades.

The Trump Administration, as we all know, has also stepped up to advance nuclear on several fronts.

It is accelerating regulatory reforms through Executive Orders—consistent with the ADVANCE Act—for more efficient, risk-informed

licensing. It is developing a more holistic approach to nuclear deployment.

How all this is coming together at NRC is a central topic of this hearing.

In a January hearing, the subcommittee heard measured optimism that NRC has been responding well to the task before it.

The developing record supports this optimism.

The NRC issued the final rule for a new advanced reactor framework—the one that had raised concerns just three years ago.

The so-called Part 53 rule looks to meet Congressional intent, offering one of the most flexible frameworks in the world, and making it easier for various technologies to work through the licensing process.

And the costs for that process have been cut in half.

The NRC is also working to issue a number of rules responsive not only to the President but also to Congress.

These include rules that will enable regulation of microreactors, rapid licensing at existing sites, and licensing of manufacturing processes, so reactors can be built on assembly lines.

The NEPA reforms from the Fiscal Responsibility Act are expected to save substantial time and workload in the siting reviews—by some estimates cutting workload by more than half and expediting decisions.

Elsewhere, NRC has already been completing licensing reviews under budget and ahead of schedule—with positive responses from the regulated industry seeking to relicense or build more reactors.

NRC is seeking structural reforms to how it oversees the licensed fleet, prioritizing attention to what really matters in safety.

We should discuss the challenges, of course, including how NRC is developing its workforce to meet the new licensing work, and how it is working with the Department of Energy or the intergovernmental process.

Given all the work underway, we should also ask what more Congress may do to assist in setting NRC up for successfully implementing its important safety mission—a mission that, when performed well, will lead to tremendous benefits for people across the nation.

I yield back the balance of my time.