RPTR KRAMER

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NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION: OVERSIGHT OF ACTIVITIES, PRIORITIES, AND FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026

House of Representatives,

Subcommittee on Energy,

Committee on Energy and Commerce,

Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:02 a.m., in Room 2123, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Robert E. Latta [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Latta, Weber, Allen, Balderson, Pfluger, Harshbarger, Miller-Meeks, Bentz, Fry, Lee, Evans, Goldman, Fedorchak, Guthrie (ex officio), Castor, Peters, Menendez, Mullin, McClellan, DeGette, Tonko, Veasey, Schrier, Fletcher, Auchincloss, and Pallone (ex officio).

Also Present: Representative Houchin.

Staff Present: Ansley Boylan, Director of Operations; Jessica Donlon, General Counsel; Calvin Huggins, Clerk, Energy; Megan Jackson, Staff Director; Mary Martin, Chief Counsel, Energy;

Sarah Meier, Counsel and Parliamentarian; Ben Mullaney, Press Secretary; Seth Ricketts, Clerk; Chris Sarley, Member Services/Stakeholder Director; Arthur Speck, Professional Staff Member; Peter Spencer, Senior Professional Staff Member, Energy; Matt VanHyfte, Communications Director; Keegan Cardman, Minority Staff Assistant; Waverly Gordon, Minority Deputy Staff Director and General Counsel; Tiffany Guarascio, Minority Staff Director; Perry Hamilton, Minority Deputy Director, Member Services and Outreach Manager; Serena Klebba, Minority Intern; Kristopher Pittard, Minority Professional Staff Member; Emma Roehrig, Minority Staff Assistant; Kylea Rogers, Minority Policy Analyst; Andrew Souvall, Minority Director of Communications, Outreach and Member Services; and Tuley Wright, Minority Staff Director, Energy.

Mr. Latta. The Subcommittee on Energy will now come to order. The chair recognizes himself for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

Good morning, and welcome to today's hearing. We welcome Chairman Nieh and the commissioners for today's hearing. It has been 3 years since we have had the full NRC, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, before the committee, and much has happened since then.

The energy landscape has been changing during this period. We need more power for emerging industrial growth in the AI race, as well as for a more robust and 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 the strength of 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 the 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 be -- more effectively and efficiently carry out its vital role 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 20 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 deployment for the 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 the central topic of today's 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 advance reactor framework, the one that had raised concerns just 3 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 to the Fiscal Responsibility Act are expected to save substantial time and workload in deciding 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 relicense and to build more reactors. NRC is seeking structural reforms to help 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 make the new licensing work and how it is working with the Department of Energy or other 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 our Nation.

And with that, I will yield back the balance of my time and recognize the gentlelady from Florida, the ranking member of the subcommittee, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Latta follows:]

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Ms. Castor. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Happy Earth Day to everyone.

Nuclear energy has been an area of bipartisan cooperation in this committee. Last Congress, we passed the ADVANCE Act that was signed by President Biden to prepare the United States to lead the world in development and deployment of advanced nuclear reactors. Thank you, Commissioner Marzano, for your leadership there, Congresswoman DeGette as well, former Rep. Duncan.

Democrats also passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to safely ensure that existing nuclear plants were not retired prematurely and the Inflation Reduction Act that provided long-term incentives for broader deployment of nuclear, including new technologies and advanced reactors, with an eye towards energy workers, particularly in coal and distressed energy communities.

The Biden administration set a target of 300 gigawatts of nuclear energy capacity by 2050 and, similarly, the Trump administration has targeted 400 gigawatts. Ambitious goals, but these goals require bipartisanship, require an independent Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and a nuclear industry that has the trust of the American people. President Trump's actions, however, are jeopardizing that progress and that trust, and we should address it together.

Last June, the President illegally fired Commissioner Christopher Hanson without cause. That was the first time that an NRC commissioner had ever been fired. The President also issued executive -- has also issued executive orders directing the NRC -- again, an independent regulator -- to reduce its workforce and modify safety rules while urging hasty approval of nuclear reactors. The NRC has lost 400 professionals, particularly in the offices handling safety. That is concerning.

Instead, the administration has deployed DOGE staffers with no experience in nuclear safety, and that is truly alarming. It appears that the White House is illegally trying to change approval processes to turn the NRC into a rubber stamp.

We can't pretend that this is business as usual. The NRC is the international gold standard for nuclear energy safety. But the administration is actively undermining that reputation and could actually slow the deployment of nuclear energy, not just in the United States but across the globe.

There is a right way to do this. The NRC must license reactors efficiently, safely, and transparently to deliver the resources we need while ensuring public confidence in nuclear power.

Today, the Trump administration and DOGE are eating away at that confidence and safety of America's nuclear enterprise and our international alliances. China dominates the build-out of new nuclear power plants, hosting nearly half of the reactors currently under construction globally.

And here is the dirty little secret that the Trump administration does not want you to know: Nuclear energy is at a disadvantage right now because it is forced to compete with coal and gas that are heavily subsidized and heavily favored by the Trump administration and many in this Congress.

People are losing trust in the Federal Government. And why should they trust this administration?

Over the last year, the Department of Energy killed over 300 energy projects. They canceled loans to build transmission lines. The administration illegally tried to impose a moratorium on offshore wind even as Americans are being crushed by high utility bills and the demand for power increases.

And now the Interior Department won't even follow congressional orders to give us a status update on energy project permits. Solar, batteries, and wind are the resources that we have right now. They made up 92 percent of new U.S. power capacity last year. In comparison, Energy Secretary Wright sat before this committee just last week and said, even for the nuclear reactors that will be critical in the coming months, we are years away from plugging them into the grid and selling electricity.

So if Republicans want to ramp up nuclear energy resources and address the skyrocketing costs for ratepayers, it is vital to understand that nuclear power is complementary to cheaper

renewable energy and storage at this moment.

Republicans say we need more energy to power the AI revolution. So they should stand up when the administration engages in corrupt, unfair practices that result in less energy. They should work with Democrats to pass policy that actually brings costs down for our neighbors back home and develops more energy resources. That is our mission today.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to our discussion and thank the NRC commissioners for being here. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Castor follows:]

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Mr. Latta. Thank you very much. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky, the chairman of the full committee, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

The Chair. Thank you, Chairman Latta, and thank you for our witnesses for being here today.

As we discuss nuclear safety and regulatory policy, today, our Nation confronts an array of challenges that must be effectively addressed to secure our energy and economic future.

Iran has exposed the harm that flows from allowing maligned nations the ability to choke off global energy supplies. But China looms above all by seeking to reorient and dominate geopolitical relationships. It seeks to overtake America's economic and technological leadership, particularly in the race to dominate energy-intensive AI.

Meanwhile, we face unprecedented accelerating demand for more power generation here at home, now estimated over 220 gigawatts to meet new peak demand over the next decade, while losing over 100 gigawatts of baseload power.

However, nuclear technology and infrastructure can help us meet this challenge. If nuclear deployments increase rapidly, as we hope, whether to fill the dispatchable generation gap or to meet various data center and industrial needs, that will create a lot of site and safety licensing work.

So can the NRC meet the pace and the scale of potential new licensing while assuring adequate safety?

A key focus of this committee's work 3 years ago that became the ADVANCE Act was to make sure NRC's vital safety work would be performed in service to the mission that nuclear energy should be used for the common defense and to provide maximum benefit to society.

This policy remains as important as ever. In addition to Congress providing direction for NRC, the Trump administration's nuclear-related executive orders have also helped focus NRC on

official regulation.

Recent NRC regulatory actions show positive signs that we are on the right track. And today we have an important opportunity to review your work.

Let me welcome Chairman Nieh and the commissioners. I look forward to discussion, and I will yield back.

[The prepared statement of Chair Guthrie follows:]

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Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, the ranking member of the full committee, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Chairman Latta.

This is a precarious moment for nuclear energy in America. On the one hand, there is more interest in nuclear energy and the carbon-free power it can deliver than at any time in the last 50 years. However, at the same time, the Trump administration's actions have thrown the safety of the American civilian nuclear fleet into question for the first time since the Atomic Energy Act unlocked the peaceful use of nuclear power over 70 years ago. And the five commissioners before us today are the last line of defense for nuclear safety.

Today, we should be talking about how the NRC is implementing the ADVANCE Act, a historic package of reforms passed last Congress to prepare our Nation for a wave of advanced nuclear reactors. And we should be discussing how the Commission is preparing itself to efficiently license advanced nuclear technologies.

But the Trump administration has made that impossible. The White House, Department of Energy, and even staff affiliated with DOGE, have attacked the NRC's independence.

Last year, President Trump illegally fired former NRC Chairman Chris Hanson, who should be sitting in front of us today. The DOE's chief counsel for nuclear energy told his colleagues that, and I quote, "The NRC is going to do whatever we tell the NRC to do." And this threat to the NRC's independence is simply unacceptable.

Fifty-two years ago, Congress passed a law creating the NRC, forever separating the parts of the government responsible for promoting nuclear energy from the parts responsible for making sure that nuclear energy is safe. And that was the right call then. It remains the right call today. Actions to tear down that separation aren't just ill-advised; they are dangerous and they jeopardize

the future of nuclear energy in our Nation. Whether or not nuclear energy has a bright future in the U.S. may come down to how or if the NRC can protect its independence over the next few years.

Commissioners, you have a duty to the American people to uphold that independence and ensure safe and secure nuclear energy in our Nation.

And I want to give credit where credit is due. Chairman Nieh, since assuming the chairmanship of the Commission earlier this year, I think your office has been a model for transparency. The NRC staff have consistently and thoroughly engaged with my staff. You have ensured that we are thoroughly briefed on the many changes that you are making to the NRC's rules to license nuclear reactors more effectively. And the level of transparency you have shown should be the standard but, unfortunately, the Department of Energy has lagged far behind the NRC in this transparency area.

I also want to praise a number of the efforts the Commission has engaged in under your leadership. Seven years ago, the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act was signed into law. It required the NRC to issue a rule to establish new technologically flexible process for licensing advanced reactors. And I am pleased that, last month, the NRC was able to publish a final rule more than a year ahead of the deadline set out by the law. And I hope developers take advantage of it going forward.

However, there are other changes by the Commission that go too far. The changes made by the Commission's reactor oversight program, the program responsible for ensuring the ongoing safety of existing operating reactors, go far beyond what was envisioned in the ADVANCE Act. Those changes could result in nearly 40 percent of the reactor oversight staff losing their jobs or being reassigned. Frankly, after the staff turnover the Commission has suffered throughout the last year as a result of DOGE's attacks, I don't think the NRC can afford another exodus of smart, talented employees.

I also have deep concerns about effects to -- I mean efforts, I should say, to tie NRC licenses

for commercial nuclear reactors to research reactors permitted by the Departments of Energy and Defense. I expect that there will be tremendous pressure on the Commission to offer those research reactors a type of formal "fast pass" to NRC licensing, and that would be a disaster and would undermine the NRC's independence, and it should not happen.

Finally, I want to end my remarks by reiterating the warning I issued last week when we had the Energy Secretary in front of us here. And I said it will be impossible for us to move forward on nuclear legislation as long as the NRC's independence is in question. So we simply cannot put the independence of the NRC at risk.

And with that, I thank you. And I yield back, Mr. Chairman, the balance of my time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pallone follows:]

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Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much. The gentleman yields back.

This concludes members' opening statements. The chair reminds members that pursuant to committee rules all members' opening statements will be made part of the record.

Again, we want to thank our witnesses for appearing and taking the time to testify before the subcommittee. Each witness will have the opportunity to give an opening statement, followed by a round of questions from the members.

Our five witnesses who are joining us today from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission today are Chairman Ho K. Nieh, Commissioner David Wright, Commissioner Bradley Crowell, Commissioner Matthew Marzano, and Commissioner Douglas Weaver. Again, thank you very much for appearing.

Just some real quick housekeeping. If you pull those mikes up close when you use them, that would be great so that we know that they are working for you. And also, the light will be green for 4 minutes, turn yellow when you have 1 minute left, and turns red when we would like you to wrap up.

And with that, we appreciate, again, you testifying before us. And, Chairman, you are recognized for 5 minutes for your opening statement. Thank you.

STATEMENTS OF THE HONORABLE HO K. NIEH, CHAIRMAN, U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION; THE HONORABLE DAVID A. WRIGHT, COMMISSIONER, U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION; THE HONORABLE BRADLEY R. CROWELL, COMMISSIONER, U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION; THE HONORABLE MATTHEW J. MARZANO, COMMISSIONER, U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION; AND THE HONORABLE DOUGLAS W. WEAVER, COMMISSIONER, U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

STATEMENT OF HO K. NIEH

Mr. Nieh. Chairman Latta, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Members Castor and Pallone, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission appreciates the bipartisan leadership of this committee through the ADVANCE Act, which is guiding NRC's modernization to accelerate the deployment of new nuclear and expand existing capacity.

The NRC's safety mission remains our top focus. Congress also mandated that the NRC's mission enable the safe and secure use of nuclear technologies through predictable and efficient regulation.

In the regulatory context, enabling means aligning our regulations with actual risks, adapting to new technologies, and adding regulatory flexibility where safety is maintained. Enabling is how the NRC fulfills its safety commitment and delivers public benefit.

America urgently needs more energy due to artificial intelligence, data centers, and industrial growth. Nuclear is seen as essential to our energy security. The question now is execution. Can America build at scale, on schedule, and at lower cost? That is where the NRC matters. Regulatory uncertainty is capital risk. And capital will go elsewhere if risk is too high.

This is a defining moment for the NRC and for nuclear energy in America. What we do today will determine whether nuclear can be deployed at scale or remains limited to one-off projects.

As America's nuclear safety regulator, the NRC's role is clear: Our safety decisions must be credible, predictable, and timely. Accordingly, the NRC is making reforms driven by Congress and the President.

Through this period of change, the NRC is engaging in coordinating with Federal partners, including the Department of Energy. In doing so, the NRC's safety decisions remain consistent with our mission and independent from the Department of Energy.

As we implement the ADVANCE Act and Executive Order 14300, the NRC is focusing on what matters most to safety by eliminating unnecessary conservatisms and applying risk-informed, performance-based approaches consistently throughout the agency.

The NRC is making major changes to how it oversees and licenses nuclear facilities in America. We are rebalancing our inspection programs to reflect the high levels of safety and security performance across the industry, and we are delivering new licensing frameworks that are predictable, efficient, and designed for deployment.

Over the last year, the NRC has delivered results, evidence of a more disciplined and efficient approach. We finalized Part 53 ahead of schedule. We issued a construction permit for a non-light water advanced reactor 9 months ahead of schedule. We approved the restart pathway for a permanently shut-down reactor. We renewed 13 operating reactor licenses. We issued a license for a TRISO fuel fabrication facility several months ahead of schedule. We launched a regulatory framework for fusion technologies. And we prepared 18 Executive Order 14300 draft rulemakings.

These results demonstrate that timely regulatory actions and a strong safety focus go hand in hand. This is how America will regain nuclear leadership. The NRC will not be an impediment to nuclear energy innovation.

To meet this moment, I am focusing the agency on three priorities. First is core mission delivery with safety, efficiency, and speed. Second is leadership and operational excellence in how we do business. Third is sustaining our performance through a culture of continuous improvement.

Success in this moment depends on our staff at the agency. Every day, the dedicated staff at the NRC deliver on a safety mission that is essential for public trust in nuclear technologies.

Delivering our mission also requires realistic planning, disciplined budget execution, and alignment with strategic goals. The NRC's fiscal year 2027 budget reflects these principles as well as the resources needed to accelerate the deployment of new nuclear while ensuring the continued safety and security of existing facilities.

Going forward, the American public can expect credible, predictable, and timely decisions from the NRC.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nieh follows:]

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Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much.

And, Commissioner Wright, you are recognized for 5 minutes for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF DAVID A. WRIGHT

Mr. Wright. Thank you very much. And good morning, Chairman Latta, Vice Chair Weber, and Ranking Member Castor, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I appreciate the committee's bipartisan leadership and continued engagement with us at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. I want to thank our chairman for his leadership during this unprecedented time for nuclear energy and my fellow commissioners for their dedication to the United States and for their collegiality as we help enable nuclear technology here and abroad.

The NRC sits at the center of the Nation's nuclear energy landscape. Since being confirmed to the Commission in 2018, I have worked to transform the NRC into a more agile and modern regulator. In 2019, Congress provided clear direction in NEIMA to provide a path for licensing reactors in a technology-neutral manner that was efficient and streamlined while maintaining safety as our north star. The NRC took this directive and got to work.

The Part 53 rulemaking, our risk-informed technology-inclusive regulatory framework, is the culmination of that work, and I am happy to say that we accomplished this 9 months ahead of schedule. This rule represents one of the most significant updates to our regulatory approach in decades, providing a flexible foundation for advanced reactor technologies. This progress reflects the dedication and expertise of the NRC staff whose commitment to professionalism and innovation continues to drive success.

While this accomplishment is huge, the American people demanded more. And in July of

2024, Congress passed and the President signed the ADVANCE Act. The first thing the NRC did was to update its mission statement. The Commission led initiative and -- we led it, and my colleague to my left was critical working with me. You know, this initiative was led by us. And in 2025, January of 2025, published the NRC's new mission statement that provides clear direction to the staff of the NRC that we are here to enable the safe use and deployment of nuclear technologies for the betterment of society.

In the year since, we have seen a sea change in culture of the staff, and they are leaning in on the mission and providing results, all while keeping safety at the heart of every decision. This culture change is more evident in the revisions to our regulations directed by President Trump's EO 14300. The NRC is delivering efficient, streamlined regulations that will enable the deployment of nuclear energy to the country, all while remaining firmly committed to safety.

At the heart of all these accomplishments are the dedicated people who work at the NRC. Every day, they bring their best selves to the agency, delivering results for the country. And as I have said many times before, the NRC is the best place and has the best people in the Federal Government. I stand by those words today, and I thank the staff for all that they do for the agency and the country.

In closing, the NRC is delivering meaningful results through a modernized mission, a skilled workforce, and an unwavering focus on protecting public health and safety. Thank you for your support, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wright follows:]

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Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much for your statement.

And, Commissioner Crowell, you are recognized for 5 minutes for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF BRADLEY R. CROWELL

Mr. Crowell. Thank you, Chairman Latta, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Castor, and members of the subcommittee, for inviting me and my fellow commissioners to appear before you today.

Today, we find ourselves at a pivotal juncture that will determine the future of commercial nuclear power not just in the United States but around the world.

As I began my term on the Commission in mid-2022, I was excited to get to work and help lead an ongoing transformation at the NRC that matched my growing confidence in our country's collective ability to position the U.S. as a world leader for the next generation of nuclear energy technologies, but most importantly, to do so while maintaining the United States' hard-earned world-class reputation for nuclear safety and security. And while change rarely happens as fast as any of us would like, I assure you that the NRC is moving with urgency in the right direction.

I am proud to have helped facilitate the many accomplishments and milestones achieved by agency staff in just the last few years. Chairman Nieh highlighted many of the NRC's most recent successes in his remarks, and I share his optimism that we are building a framework to accelerate further achievements in the next few years and beyond.

However, success is far from guaranteed. Continued U.S. leadership in nuclear energy generation rests on our Nation's steadfast commitment to nuclear safety and security. As we look ahead, my confidence in our nuclear fleet is buoyed by Congress building and sustaining bipartisan support for nuclear power as an indispensable contributor to our Nation's energy needs, and in doing

so, for giving the NRC the policy direction and resources needed to modernize its approach to responsible nuclear regulation and oversight without sacrificing safety.

I appreciate the current and past members of this committee for their help directing needed reforms at the NRC, including through the 2019 Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act and the 2024 ADVANCE Act. These key legislative accomplishments provided needed policy support to accelerate the NRC's ongoing efforts to modernize its regulatory approach and sharpen the agency's focus as we establish a refreshed platform for success.

To further advance these congressional efforts, the current administration issued Executive Order 14300 last May, Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The thrust of the EO doubles down on much of the agency's ongoing work and related reform efforts. Viewed positively, the EO is a welcome recognition of the integral role the NRC can play in catalyzing the safe and secure deployment of new and advanced nuclear energy systems.

But getting it right is more important than moving quickly in pursuit of artificial timelines. Keeping apace and working efficiently are important, but moving with haste alone can quickly become counterproductive. The oft repeated mantra fostering rapid advancements in many cutting-edge technology sectors is to move fast and break things. But while that ethos may apply well in some technology sectors, it is the antithesis of safe, secure, and informed nuclear regulation.

The legitimate need to enhance regulatory efficiencies without impacting safety is also the reason my greatest concern as a commissioner today relates to the current and future NRC workforce. The agency is being directed to do more with less, despite a growing workload and aggressive new timeframes for agency licensing and oversight activities. This is an unsustainable dynamic.

In my role as an NRC commissioner, I am often asked what keeps me awake at night. As of late, my response is always to question whether we are doing enough to support and supplement our staff and ensure that the NRC workforce is robust and resourced to do the anticipated work

coming before the agency without sacrificing our commitment and attention to safety and security.

My second greatest concern for fiscal year 2027 is the NRC's continued ability to execute on the NRC's full mission, including the oversight of our Nation's current fleet of nuclear power reactors. While I wholeheartedly support the need to incorporate new efficiencies into all processes throughout the agency, we must not let the fervor of deregulation and a singular focus on operational efficiencies undermine the NRC's critical role in ensuring the continued safe and secure operation of existing NRC license facilities.

For example, I am concerned that shifting the agency's focus to license activities too heavily or too quickly will come at the expense of maintaining sufficient talent and resources focused on our equally important oversight responsibilities. At this current juncture, the NRC can ill-afford to rob Peter to pay Paul, nor can we have unforced errors within our existing fleet of reactors and fuel facilities.

To rise to the momentous occasion before us, the NRC must also restore, build, and maintain public trust. I am concerned on this front because the surest way to undermine the public's confidence in nuclear safety and in the NRC's role as safety regulator is to decrease transparency. This maxim is true for all things nuclear, but it is particularly acute with respect to nuclear power generation and used fuel management.

Over the past year, circumstances have clouded stakeholder belief in the agency's commitment to transparency as a pillar of the NRC's Principles of Good Regulation. The agency's ability to seek and receive valuable input from external experts, nongovernmental agencies, trade associations, members of the public, and all other stakeholders, has been hampered as we embark on the retooling of the NRC's entire regulatory framework.

As we modernize the NRC, we must retain a reasonable ability to engage proactively and transparently with regulated entities and all stakeholders. Failure to do so risks undermining public trust and forfeiting the social license essential to an enduring future for nuclear technologies.

Lastly, I see in our current cadre of NRC commissioners a set of leaders with diverse skill sets and unique perspectives that constitute the right mix at the right time for effectively leading the NRC at this critical juncture. We each understand and appreciate the necessity and value of working as a collegial policymaking body.

In conclusion, with adequate resources for the agency and with clear, consistent leadership, I believe the NRC can achieve many great things. I intend to do my part to ensure we meet our responsibilities to the NRC workforce and our obligations to the American public for whom we serve.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Crowell follows:]

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Mr. Latta. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Marzano, you are recognized for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF MATTHEW J. MARZANO

Mr. Marzano. Thank you, Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Castor, and the members of the subcommittee. And thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Seventy years ago, President Eisenhower stood before the United Nations to present his vision for the peaceful use of nuclear technology to a world that had crossed a threshold into the atomic age. The Atoms for Peace program that followed established the groundwork for international civil nuclear cooperation and reoriented the Atomic Energy Commission towards transparency and a dual mandate to promote and regulate nuclear technology for commercial purposes. Thus, the agency became tasked with fulfilling a defining premise of Eisenhower's address that this greatest -- quote, "this greatest of destructive forces can be developed into a great boon, for the benefit of all mankind," end quote.

The nuclear enterprise in the United States sits at a similar yet distinct crossroads today. The extraordinary promise of emerging nuclear technologies has converged with a geopolitical urgency to address energy security and climate change. The interests of the industry, government, and the public have aligned in ways not seen in the generation. Yet, many of the same pressures and expectations that tested the Atomic Energy Commission endure in this moment. And today, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has inherited this responsibility to enable the safe use of this technology, while ensuring adequate protection of public health and safety.

For many years, NRC staff have identified reforms that could improve efficiency without compromising safety. Some of those ideas have been discussed, studied, but eventually deferred.

Further, in the past, rulemaking has often been overly burdensome and lengthy. Multi-year rulemaking efforts with extensive layers of internal review can create uncertainty, consume resources, and delay benefits without proportionate gains in safety. In that context, I view the directives of the ADVANCE Act and the executive orders as providing a vehicle and, frankly, the encouragement to modernize and incorporate regulatory reforms that have long been contemplated but not fully realized.

But I would also emphasize that modernization must be approached with care and discipline. The NRC's credibility, earned over decades, is rooted in a deliberate evidence-based approach to decision-making. Public trust, safety margins, and the long-term viability of nuclear energy all depend on getting this right. Moving too quickly or without sufficient technical grounding risks undermining the very goals we are trying to achieve.

Building and sustaining a regulatory system that is both modern and durable depends on two foundational elements: research and workforce. Simply stated, robust research provides the technical basis for informed decision-making. It reduces uncertainty, supports risk-informed regulation, and broadens our capability to assess new technologies on their merits. Without it, we are left to rely on assumptions and unnecessary conservatism where we should be relying on evidence and data.

Equally important is the strength of our workforce. The NRC's effectiveness depends on its expertise, independence, and the judgment of its people. As technology has evolved, so too must our capabilities. Investing in the next generation of engineers, safety analysts, and regulatory professionals is not optional. It is essential to sustaining our mission. That is why I remain focused on addressing our workforce challenges. This involves an honest assessment of the reasons individuals may choose to leave the NRC and implementing solutions to address them. We must better leverage our hiring and compensation authorities and implement worklife flexibilities to attract and retain talent and incentivize public service.

In closing, modernization is both necessary and achievable. But it must be done in a way that preserves the principles that have served this Nation well: independence, rigor, and an unwavering commitment to safety. If we pair thoughtful reform with strong investment in research and people, we can build a regulatory framework that supports innovation while maintaining the public trust that is the cornerstone of our work.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Marzano follows:]

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Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much for your opening statement.

And, Commissioner Weaver, you are recognized for 5 minutes for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS A. WEAVER

Mr. Weaver. Thank you.

Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Castor, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you with my colleagues to discuss the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's efforts to enable the safe and secure use of nuclear technologies for the benefit of our Nation.

Today marks the completion of my fourth month on the Commission. In that short time, I have had the privilege of acting on many policy and rulemaking -- policy issues and rulemaking activities that are the culmination of the NRC staff work for many months and, in some cases, years prior to my arrival. It is an exciting time to be at the NRC.

I have approached my role with a safety-focused, independent mindset and a regulatory philosophy grounded in three principles: modernization of our regulatory framework, risk-informed and performance-based decision-making, and accountability and transparency to the American public.

These principles guide my support for reforms to the NRC's licensing, oversight, and organizational processes. They reflect both the long-standing principles -- the NRC's Principles of Good Regulation and are responsive to the clear direction Congress has provided through the mandates in the ADVANCE Act.

NRC is delivering in a big way and will continue to do so as we implement our new organizational model, new regulations, and more risk-informed programs. While the work

continues to modernize our structure and regulatory framework to set up the country for future success, we are also delivering on today's needs. I would like to highlight a few of those accomplishments. Some of these the chairman has already mentioned.

NRC staff has developed a safe pathway for restart of formerly shut-down reactors to add more power to the grid. The staff completed thorough licensing reviews, enabling Palisades to become the first permanently shut-down reactor in U.S. history to move back towards operational status. Staff oversight continues with rigorous inspections to ensure that Palisades will meet all safety and regulatory requirements before its restart.

Likewise, at the Crane Clean Energy Center in Pennsylvania, NRC staff is conducting licensing and inspection activities to support a licensee-projected restart next year. I recently traveled to both Palisades and Crane and was impressed with the NRC teams that are overseeing our inspection activities. We are fortunate to have such highly trained and dedicated public servants.

NRC approved the construction permit application for TerraPower's Natrium reactor in Wyoming, the first non-light water reactor approval in 40 years. The staff's review was completed ahead of schedule and in less than 18 months.

A robust fuel cycle will be needed to support our country's nuclear energy ambitions, so I would also like to mention the recently issued license to TRISO for the first-of-a-kind high-assay low-enriched uranium fuel fabrication facility in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

NRC stands ready to meet the country's needs today and will be even better positioned to do so in the near future. I would describe the work we are doing as transformational. The full scope of the changes will become apparent as the Commission deliberates on and issues the full suite of proposed rules in the coming months. These regulatory changes, in conjunction with the cultural and organizational alignment in progress, will result in an NRC that is both safety-focused and a true enabler of nuclear technology. That is the vision.

I am committed to advancing that vision through my votes, my engagement with the staff and

stakeholders, and my work with my colleagues on the Commission. I appreciate the committee's oversight and look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weaver follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much for all of your opening statements. We really appreciate it.

This will conclude the opening statements from our witnesses, and we will move into our question and answer portion of the hearing.

I am going to begin the questioning and recognize myself for 5 minutes.

You know, first, I won't go down the line, but the first question I usually ask everybody that comes before this subcommittee is do we need to have more energy produced in this country. Would you all agree to that? That we need to have more power?

Thank you very much.

Chairman Nieh, if I could start some questions with you. You know, one of the things I think I heard from all of the -- from you and from the commissioners are that, you know, that you are looking at actual risk, adapting new technology, and adding flexibility.

You know, we have heard from our members in the past and also now about how things have been at the NRC. What has happened in the last couple years now that -- it seems like you are all running on the same page with one another.

Mr. Nieh. Thank you for the question, Chairman Latta.

I think the ADVANCE Act was a very important piece of legislation. And one of the things that I found most meaningful in that act was bringing in the enabling element of our mission alongside our safety focus. The NRC has an incredibly dedicated, technically competent workforce that has had a tremendous safety focus over its history. And now bringing in this enabling component and using that as kind of the engine behind our regulatory activities and what we are looking at in terms of supporting the accelerated deployment of new nuclear technologies and expanding the existing capacity, all while maintaining safety, enabling has provided the NRC with that strong sense of purpose to do something that benefits the American people by delivering safe and

secure nuclear technology to meet our energy needs.

Mr. Latta. Let me follow up with this. Are we keeping up with the rest of the world now when we are talking about nuclear technology?

Mr. Nieh. In my opinion, Chairman Latta, I think there are some countries, particularly Russia and China, that are -- they are building reactors at a pace much faster than the United States. I believe through the regulatory actions that we are taking to provide safe, predictable, and efficient frameworks to enable deployment in the United States will help us keep pace with other countries. And also, what we are doing here in the United States is something that could help the United States export its technologies to our allies around the world.

And moreover, there is -- I was just in Vienna, Austria, last week to represent the United States at the Convention on Nuclear Safety. And many countries around the world, in Europe and in Asia, are facing the same demand from their governments to have their regulatory bodies undergo significant regulatory reforms so they could bring the energy that they need to their country.

So we are at the forefront of that. I have heard from many of my international colleagues that they are, you know, eager to see what NRC is doing. And I think us leading the way will help us catch up to other countries that are able to build fast --

Mr. Latta. One last question for you, and if -- I ask this one quickly for you. On our small modular reactors -- because, you know, these are something that we are going to have to have deployed sooner than later, and we are hearing 6, 7 years. Is there a way to see about SMRs, getting these out sooner and, of course, always safely?

Mr. Nieh. So some of the things that create bottlenecks in the delivery of new nuclear are things that go beyond what NRC can do. Things that get in the way of deployment are typically finance, supply chain, and the workforce to build.

What I would share with you, Chairman Latta, is that the NRC is not -- the regulatory process is not going to be an impediment for deployment of nuclear technologies, whether it is an SMR, a

microreactor, or a large light water reactor. So the NRC is working toward having efficient, predictable frameworks that provide for credible safety decisions from the NRC, so that when the financing requirements are met, the supply chain is solid, and the workforce is there to build, then we can execute.

Mr. Latta. Thank you.

Commissioner Wright, I only got about 50 seconds left. You know, you talk about more agile, modern regulations out there always keeping safety first. How has the work been with working from the NRC with the companies out there? And I only got about 30 seconds.

Mr. Wright. Yeah. So last year was a, you know, a very difficult year in some ways because we lost a lot of people, but it was a opportunity for people to do things that -- you know, skill set the NRC has, it made them attractive. And so we had people that took that opportunity, which is great. But the people who stayed with us are very passionate about what they do. And people who might have had to wait a little bit of time before they had to get that opportunity, they stepped up, and they are producing, and they are creating their own legacy now.

Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much. My time has expired. There is so many questions and such little time.

The chair recognizes the gentlelady from Florida, the ranking member of the subcommittee, for 5 minutes for questions.

Ms. Castor. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you again to all the NRC commissioners for being here today but for your service to our country.

Commissioners Crowell and Marzano, when you appeared before the Environment and Public Works Senate Committee last fall, you both indicated that you could be fired by the President if you refused to approve an administration-favored nuclear reactor design due to safety concerns. Is this still the case?

Mr. Crowell. Thank you for the question. My belief remains unchanged that I could be

fired by the President at any time for any reason.

Thank you.

Mr. Marzano. Yes, Ranking Member Castor. While, you know, the dynamics of the Commission have changed with the new makeup and bringing on Commissioner Weaver and Chairman Nieh, the fact does remain that it is still a distinct possibility that we can get fired. I will caveat that it could -- it is not very clear what exactly that reason would be, but it is certainly still a possibility.

Ms. Castor. Including approval of an administration-favored nuclear reactor design?

Mr. Marzano. That could be a potential reason.

Ms. Castor. Having the specter of being fired hanging over all Commission decisions decreases the Commission's credibility, credibility that Chairman Nieh identified in his testimony as critical to the Commission's mission. And I agree with that.

But I also agree, Commissioner Crowell, with the point you made in your testimony that transparency is critical to the NRC's credibility. Talk about how some of the changes made to the NRC's transparency processes over the last 15 months have undermined public trust in the Commission.

Mr. Crowell. Thank you for the question. One of the big changes compared to past practices is that we are now no longer able to share proposed rulemaking with the regulated community and get their feedback to help craft and design the best rules. A separate EO, separate from EO 14300, requires all of NRC's rulemakings to go through OMB, which is a change from the past at the NRC. That certainly changes -- you know, that closes the door in terms of external awareness and engagement and changes the dynamic that we traditionally worked under.

Nuclear is a bit unique in the fact that transparency is, you know, is paramount. The regulating industry wants to know -- wants to have a hand in helping craft things and know what is coming. I think that is, in this case, important for crafting good rules. But other stakeholders need

to be involved as well, and right now it is a black box.

Ms. Castor. And could that have the opposite effect of what is intended to ensure, not just the safe licensing of new nuclear technologies, but it could delay things over time if you do not have robust public and stakeholder engagement?

Mr. Crowell. Yeah. It very much calls into question the durability of the rules we put out and our -- if we are unwilling to extend comment periods to give a reasonable amount of time for external entities to review the voluminous amount of rulemaking we are doing, that would call it into question further.

Ms. Castor. It is very concerning.

And, Chairman Nieh, from the weekly reports NRC submits, the number of NRC departures has not slowed down since January of 2025. It appears that over 500 professional staffers have left, with only 65 arrivals, about a 15 percent decrease in staffing. I certainly heard Commissioner Wright compliment the dedicated people at the NRC. Commissioner Crowell highlighted the greatest concern is the current and future NRC workforce, the shifting of talent.

What is the Commission doing to help retain and recruit staff with the application and preapplication engagement? Are you concerned about having technical staff burnout and folks continue to leave?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Ranking Member Castor. I believe that I am fully aligned with my fellow commissioners that our people are our greatest asset and they are a priority for this agency. The NRC has a very strong workforce, a dedicated workforce committed to the mission. We do appreciate the hiring authorities that have been afforded in the ADVANCE Act. And we, right now, are, through our executive director for operation, implementing a human capital strategy to ensure that we are recruiting and retaining the key skill sets we need to deliver our safety and mission effectively to the United States.

So we have a staffing plan for our new organization. We are hiring to fill those vacancies.

To put it in perspective, we have, roughly, 120 people less than what we have requested in our fiscal year 2027 budget. And we feel very confident that we can fill those vacancies, again, using the hiring authorities in the ADVANCE Act, as well as the additional tools that we are working internally with the agency to recruit and retain our staff.

Ms. Castor. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you very much. The gentlelady yields back.

The chair recognizes the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Kentucky, for 5 minutes for questions.

The Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for yielding the time. Thank you for being here to the NRC.

So this is a question to all commissioners. The ADVANCE Act was largely about driving NRC to improve its performance, to meet an influx of new license applications, and still -- and that is important -- perform its safety mission.

It looks like you are improving performance for the influx of license and meeting your safety mission. So I would say the NRC seems to be firing on all cylinders right now. Would you all agree with -- that is kind of yes or no. I guess, the NRC -- anybody have any -- say NRC is not going in the right direction, I guess? Because I think all of you would agree.

Thank you.

So, Chairman Nieh, on the nuclear -- I guess the record should reflect you all said yes, right? Okay. Good.

Chairman Nieh, you were on staff at the NRC during the last nuclear renaissance in the mid-2000s timeframe. Unfortunately, that didn't really materialize like it was hoped. What do you think is different this time around? I know we are asking a lot of people to invest a lot of money in nuclear power because we know we need it. And so what is different this time around?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you for the question, Chairman Guthrie.

Yes. In the last renaissance, the NRC hired a lot of people for what they anticipated in new reactor licensing applications. And what is different now really ties back to this enabling element of our mission, which is really that sense of purpose for our agency. So we have this enabling aspect.

And what we are also doing differently, instead of just hiring people to handle the work, we are fundamentally looking at how we make these decisions. We recognize that our regulations were built decades ago when we didn't know as much as we know today. So we are fundamentally looking at our regulatory licensing frameworks to be able to deliver credible safety decisions and working smarter, not harder, and not just by hiring new people.

The Chair. Okay. Thank you. Because the thing about -- you know, we need, I think I said 200 megawatts -- gigawatts of power, 200 -- and so, you know, people are going to make investment, they need to know there is some basis of stability, you know, as we move forward. So thanks for your work.

So a reorganization -- again, Chairman Nieh. Earlier this week NRC issued its reorganization plan, which you intend to complete by midsummer. How will this reorganization plan improve your work to license new reactors and conduct oversight?

Mr. Nieh. Chairman Guthrie, the reorganization, one key aspect of it in supporting licensing work is that we created the Office of Advanced Reactors, which is going to have dedicated leadership and technical staff to support the anticipated licensing that comes before the agency. So that is probably the main area in supporting deployment.

What I will also say is that we are now focusing the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation on the licensing activities that will support the expansion of existing nuclear capacity in the United States through things like power uprates, license renewals, and other risk-informed programs.

The Chair. Okay. So would you also explain briefly how NRC is going to treat applications from reactors authorized by DOE?

Mr. Nieh. Yes. We recently just published for public comment a rule that lays out how we

are going to allow information to be referenced for reactor designs previously authorized by the Department of Energy or the Department of War. We are currently developing the staff guidance.

And the short version of it is that we will use the information from other authorizations, and we will validate how that information meets our regulatory requirements. We are going to do it efficiently. We are not going to be a rubber stamp. But there is no need to retread the tire on things that we feel we have confidence in that meets our regulations. If there are things in our regulations that aren't covered by the other authorization programs, we will do our independent review.

The Chair. Okay. Do all the commissioners agree that is the right track to take?

Everybody is kind of saying yes. All right. I see there is no dissent on that question.

So that is just the point that I want to make is that you guys are extremely important, and we value your independence -- I think that is extremely important as well -- but also working with Department of Energy as we have this great renaissance of American manufacturing, American technology, productivity that is coming. But it takes energy to drive all of that. And I think a lot of us agree, on both sides of the aisle, nuclear is dispatchable space load and it is carbon free. So I know a lot of people prefer that, that route. And we have to be able to do it, we are asking for a lot of investment to do it.

And knowing -- that we work together to get it done, but knowing that you take the safety of American citizens more -- or in the world, really -- nuclear -- is important, and independent as you do is important. So I thank you, and I will yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey, the ranking member for the full committee, for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Chairman.

Last week, Energy Secretary Wright came before the subcommittee and he said that it is,

quote, critically important that the NRC be independent, and he rebuked a DOE employee who said that the NRC would do whatever the DOE wanted it to do. And while I am skeptical that everyone in the Trump administration agrees with Secretary Wright on this point, I want to ensure that all of you do.

So let me just go down the line for a yes or no question. Do you think that it is critical to the future of nuclear energy in this country that the NRC retain its independence? Chairman Nieh?

Mr. Nieh. Yes.

Mr. Pallone. Commissioner Crowell?

Mr. Crowell. Yes.

Mr. Pallone. Commissioner Marzano?

Mr. Marzano. Yes.

Mr. Pallone. Commissioner Wright?

Mr. Wright. Yes.

Mr. Pallone. We have a lot of Wrights around here.

And Commissioner Weaver?

Mr. Weaver. Yes.

Mr. Pallone. Well, thank you. And I appreciate that, because I do believe that any potential nuclear renaissance will be cut short if the NRC can't guarantee its independence. And so I was glad to hear that from Secretary Wright and from all of you as well.

But we do need to ensure that safeguards are in place to fight against encroachment by the White House. So let me start with Commissioners Crowell and Marzano. Do NRC commissioners and staff have adequate ways to speak up if they feel that the safety of the nuclear industry or the independence of the NRC is being threatened, and what can the Commission do to ensure that staff have a way to speak up when there is improper influence? I will start with Commissioner Crowell.

Mr. Crowell. Yes. I believe that is still the case both for commissioners as well as for staff.

But the telltale sign will be, when you speak out, if there are negative repercussions, that would call into question our independence. But, right now, it is well-known that the Commission has an open door for all staff to come and discuss any issues that they want. And commissioners, inherent in the nature of their job, should be able to speak on whatever topics they want in their own capacity.

Mr. Pallone. Well, thank you.

Commissioner Marzano?

Mr. Marzano. Yes. I agree with my colleague that staff do have the avenues available to them right now. But it is our responsibility as a commission to continue to reenforce our policy on safety culture, ensuring that those pathways remain available. And yes, time will tell, as far as as we get down the road with some of the rulemaking efforts that we have going on right now, whether or not staff will feel able to raise those issues without fear of retaliation.

RPTR DEAN

EDTR ZAMORA

[11:00 a.m.]

Mr. Pallone. So are you suggesting that some of the rulemaking that you talked about might address that? Is that --

Mr. Marzano. I would say that, you know, as we are negotiating and working on these rulemakings that dissenting opinions inevitably do occur and staff should feel the confidence or have the confidence to raise those issues and those dissenting opinions, and they have continued. Today, they have them and they will have them in the future.

Mr. Pallone. All right, thank you.

Last thing I wanted to talk about, NRC's changes to the reactor oversight process, or ROP. Last month, the NRC overhauled the ROP for the first time in 25 years. And while I am supportive of the Commission finding efficiencies, I do worry that a reduced focus on a reactor oversight could eventually erode the important safety culture that has developed at our Nation's reactor operator.

So let me ask the same to Commissioner Crowell and Marzano, how can the NRC ensure that the changes made to the ROP ultimately promote efficiency instead of eroding safety?

Mr. Crowell. I think as commissioners we are going to have to remain vigilant to be sure we don't find ourselves on the slippery slope with regard to oversight and its importance to safety. I would note that, you know, the world class safety record of the U.S. nuclear fleet is due, in large part, to the ROP, not in spite of it. And I am worried that if we move too quickly to minimize our inspection and oversight programs, we are going to see some -- you know, we are going to end up with unforced errors or negative results that are going to impact our entire effort to move towards a renaissance.

Mr. Pallone. Commissioner Marzano?

Mr. Marzano. Yes. I think there are a couple of aspects here. One is that we have an

oversight program that is responsive to fleet performance. And so if we are seeing declines and certain indicators and things like that, the ROP process should react to that and ensure that continuous sustained high performance of the fleet remains.

The other aspects here, I think, that are very important is that we are able to collect that data that gives us the ability to trend and analyze and look out for those performance declines.

And so what we have done as a commission in a recent ROP is ask the staff to provide self-assessment in the next 24 months of the changes. And we should continue to have that as part of the ROP process moving forward to ensure that we are on a path of continuous improvement in maintaining the operating performance of the existing fleet.

Mr. Pallone. Well, thank you gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Latta. Thank you very much. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia's 12th District for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Allen. Thank you, Chairman Latta, for holding this important hearing today with the commissioners from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Nuclear energy is critical for our energy security here in the United States, as it is affordable, reliable, and clean with baseload capacity. I am no stranger to the roll and importance of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as my district, the 12th District of Georgia, is home to Plant Vogtle. Plant Vogtle has units 3 and 4 which just came on operation, and they are the first nuclear reactors built in the United States in over three decades.

With units 3 and 4 in full commercial operation, Plant Vogtle is the largest nuclear power station in the country. I am proud of all the co-owners who persevered through this project, and it shows America actually can do big things.

Plant Vogtle 3 and 4 were the first nuclear units constructed under 10 CFR Part 52.

Chairman Nieh, as I understand it, the promise of this one-step licensing regime is that, once

the resource-intensive licensing and construction of the first plant of a particular design or reference plan in Part 42 parlance has been completed, followup on applications to build the same as constructed lead plant design would realize significant savings and expedited review. Now that plant Vogtle's units 3 and 4, the AP1000 reactors, are operating, Westinghouse has submitted an update to the AP1000 design to reflect Vogtle 4 as built.

Chairman Nieh, what order of magnitude and resource and schedule savings should a future applicant referring the Plant Vogtle 4 completed reactor design expect to see?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman Allen, for the question.

We, the NRC, learned a lot from the Vogtle 3 and 4 experience in implementing Part 52. And many of those lessons are being brought into some of the broader rulemaking activities that we are pursuing under the Executive Order 14300 in making improvements for greater flexibility in Part 52. Notwithstanding, we just received the latest revision for the Westinghouse AP1000 design, and that was basically taking what unit 4 looks like and putting that into the certified design. And we expect to make that safety decision in a credible manner in a very expedited period of time, probably before the end of this year.

In relation to future AP1000 activities, again, based on the experience and the certified design, we are not looking at things we haven't seen before, so an applicant can expect significant improvements to the time when there is a licensing decision.

Mr. Allen. Great, good. Thank you.

Any of the other commissioners wish to weigh in on this process?

No comment. Okay.

All right. Last Congress, we made great strides in advancing nuclear energy policy, most notably with the ADVANCE Act. Provisions for my bill, the Nuclear Licensing Efficiency Act, were signed into law as part of the ADVANCE Act. Part of my bill was to improve the licensing process.

And this is for any of the commissioners that would like to weigh in. How has the NRC been

implementing these provisions, which included periodic updates to performance metrics use of existing licensing basis when licensing reactors at an existing site, and are there any challenges in this licensing process? And I would open that up to any commissioners that would like to respond.

Mr. Marzano. Yes. Thank you for the question, Congressman.

I think one of the most transformative efforts under the licensing efficiency is how we communicate with applicants during the license review process. Last year, the former executive director for operations directed staff to look at what we call consultation versus guidance. It is a principle that drives staff interactions to not cross the line into where we would be providing any particular applicant with additional information that we wouldn't give to anyone else. That has, in the past, hindered open and frank exchange. And really when you talk about delays, it is the exchange of this information and request for additional information where this lack of understanding can develop and delay the process.

And so what I have heard from stakeholders as they have come in is a dramatic shift in how they interact with staff and the information that they get.

Mr. Allen. Okay. Any other comments?

Well, I am out of time, but I will say we had a dinner last night with Atlantic Energy, and I will say that technology has really improved our ability to process all of this information and get this permitting under control and get these -- we have got to get these things built across the country. And I do appreciate all of you being here today and your work in this important endeavor.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Latta. The gentleman yields back.

And the chair now recognizes the gentleman from California's 50th District for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Peters. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the witnesses for being here.

The San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, or SONGS, sits just outside of my district in San

Diego on a beautiful stretch of the California coast. The spent nuclear fuel at SONGS is within 100 feet of the Pacific Ocean, sits near dense population centers, an active military base, and multiple fault lines. The GAO, the Government Accountability Office, has rated the flood hazard level at the site as high and the wildfire potential as very high. Right now, we are on schedule to fully decommission the plant by 2028. However, one thing that will remain on site after the plant is demolished is the spent nuclear fuel and dry storage.

What happens to that spent fuel matters greatly to the people of southern California in my district of San Diego. My constituents, along with many around the country, know we need a long-term fix for spent nuclear storage, fuel storage. And decades of inaction have lead us to where we are today and we can't wait any longer.

I was encouraged to see Department of Energy's request for information gauging nationwide interest on which States would be willing to accept spent fuel for, quote, Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses. I have expressed concern about the consent-based process before. I am a sceptic a little bit about the viability of getting consent from a community to take the waste for storage. I am also concerned, if you got consent, that the geology would be appropriate for nuclear storage. But I will be closely monitoring and hope that we can -- since we have chosen this path, we can come up with something viable and useful.

Mr. Chairman, the -- Chairman Nieh, the NRC is responsible for regulating the safe storage of spent fuel at reactor sites. DOE is responsible for its long-term storage. If we can find a long-term solution to spent nuclear fuel, do you see any issues with NRC being prepared to work with DOE to begin transferring spent fuel to those long-term storage sites or do you have any concerns about that?

Mr. Nieh. No, sir. We will stand ready to fulfill our safety obligations for whatever approach is decided.

Mr. Peters. Okay, great. One thing that has got a lot of attention recently is the viability of

spent nuclear fuel recycling and both for using spent fuel and for shoring up supply chains for certain classes of reactors. I have a bill, the REFUEL Act, which I lead with -- the Nuclear REFUEL Act, which I lead with Chairman Latta, that would streamline the licensing process for certain fuel reprocessing facilities without compromising safety or the NRC's mission. That bill passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on a strong bipartisan vote. I look forward to seeing it in this committee and hoping that it becomes law.

Chairman Nieh, if this bill becomes law, will you be able to license these facilities in a timely manner? Do you foresee having to do a rulemaking? How do you think that implementation will go, and what will be the challenges we face in getting those facilities into the ground?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman. Yes, we envision being able to license these type of facilities in a timely manner. It is part of the overall rulemaking efforts under the Executive Order 14300. There are active activities at the agency looking at being able to enable safe and secure use of these types of technologies. We will be ready.

Mr. Peters. Okay, great. I just want to finally say thank you for all endorsing the concept of bipartisanship. I know there is a lot of -- there is a lot of back-and-forth politically in this town, more than I have seen in most of my time in Congress. I just ask you to keep your heads down, follow the science, do the right thing, and continue to serve the country in an honorable way.

And I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

So I just want members to know a vote has been called. We have two votes. There is about 13 minutes left, so what we are going to do is try to get a couple more members in.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio's 12th District for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Balderson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for being here. And I have the same sentiment that Mr. Peters also has, so thank you for being here today.

Chairman Nieh, I would like to touch on the Commission's process for reviewing uprate

requests to nuclear facilities and increase their generation output. Last year, the House passed my bill, the Great Power Act, which will help expedite certain generation projects through grid operators' interconnection queues. And recently, FERC has approved requests from grid operators to expedite projects through there queues to increase generation and meet the growing demand. For example, PJM's Reliability Resource Initiative includes five nuclear projects, including four uprates at nuclear facilities to increase capacity by nearly 500 megawatts.

Can you discuss the NRC's review process for uprate requests at existing nuclear facilities, and what is your timeframe for finishing these reviews?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman, for the question. The NRC has had a power uprate program for decades. And, in fact, over the years that we have been doing power uprates, we have approved nearly 9,000 megawatts electric of uprated capacity. That is equivalent to about nine large nuclear power plants.

And we look at power uprates that are three different types. We have small uprates that we call measurement uncertain, uncertainty recapture, a couple percent. Then we have stretch power uprates, which are on the order of 7 to 10 percent of additional power, and then extended power uprates which are either up to 20 percent or perhaps slightly more.

So we have a lot of experience doing this. We are using efficiencies and risk-informed approaches, and we are aligning our organization to be able to process these license applications in very reasonable periods of time. We actually have, you know, specific mandates for timeliness for our licensing activities that were driven in part by the ADVANCE Act, as well the executive order, and we intend to deliver very timely decisions for uprate activities that we are anticipating.

Mr. Balderson. All right. Thank you.

Commissioner Wright and Commissioner Weaver, do you have anything that you would like to add, and do you believe there is any room to safely speed up the review process for stretch or extended power uprates?

Mr. Wright, go ahead, sir.

Mr. Wright. Thank you very much for the question.

Quite honestly, I think that staff has been -- they have been leaning in in this area in a big way. They have reduced the number of hours that it has taken to do these uprates, and it has been on a curve that is coming down. I am very happy with what I see there and encouraged about what they are doing.

Mr. Balderson. Commissioner Wright -- Weaver? Thank you.

Mr. Weaver. I agree with what the chairman and Commissioner Wright has said that, you know, using the risk-informed techniques has allowed us to bring these times down and maintain safety.

Mr. Balderson. Okay, thank you.

Back to you, Chairman Nieh. The ADVANCE Act included language directing the NRC to facilitate the licensing of reactors at brownfield sites and increase the efficiency of environmental reviews. Chairman, can you discuss how the Commission is implementing this provision of the ADVANCE Act? And more broadly, how can placing new reactors at brownfield sites help expedite the NRC's NEPA review process and get these reactors up and running faster?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman. Yes, we have implemented many licensing efficiencies that were driven by the ADVANCE Act, and we have reflected those also in how we are doing these rulemakings. Probably the biggest thing that will really help with brownfield sites is our reformation of how we do environmental reviews.

So we have made significant changes to making sure that we are doing exactly what the National Environmental Policy Act requires, nothing more, nothing less, and doing those reviews in a much more efficient way. And that is going to save a significant amount of licensing time for a brownfield location and doing the citing and environmental work that is required because, obviously, at a brownfield site things have already been looked at, so we can build on that and not have to

reinvent the wheel.

Mr. Balderson. Thank you.

Would any others like to comment on that or -- yes, sir, Mr. Crowell.

Mr. Crowell. I would just say that brownfield sites are representing tremendous opportunity, but not all brownfield sites are the same. And with the context of nuclear, you have got to look at where you have got, you know, contemporary environmental review that you could leverage and adequate transmission and hookup.

So looking at that, if you can bring those two things together, it becomes very attractive for new nuclear builds.

Mr. Balderson. Thank you very much. And thank you all again for being here.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you.

The gentleman from New Jersey's Eighth District is recognized for 5 minutes for questions, and we have 8 minutes left in the first vote.

Mr. Menendez. Thank you, Chairman.

This is an incredibly important hearing as States such as New Jersey and tech companies are turning to nuclear energy to address rapidly increasing energy demand. At the same time, we have watched President Trump attack our Federal agencies and public servants and undermine their ability to carry out their critical missions and service to our country.

As Ranking Members Pallone and Castor previously emphasized, maintaining the independence of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is essential to keeping our community safe. But the NRC has experienced significant threats to its independence since President Trump took office.

Commissioners Marzano and Crowell, at a Senate hearing last year, you both indicated that you could possibly be fired if you refused to approve a Trump administration-favored nuclear reactor.

Is that correct?

Mr. Crowell. My understanding, it remains unchanged, I could be fired at any time for any reason by the President.

Mr. Marzano. Yes.

Mr. Menendez. Is it normal for a commissioner at a bipartisan independent Federal regulator to feel retaliation from the President of the United States when a commissioner exercises their independent judgment on a matter of jurisdiction, yes or no?

Mr. Crowell. Yes.

Mr. Menendez. So it is normal?

Mr. Crowell. Sorry, it is not normal.

Mr. Menendez. Thank you.

Mr. Marzano. It is not normal.

Mr. Menendez. Yeah, I agree. And it is not normal when the President -- for the President of the United States to fire a Democratic commissioner years before his term expires for expressing concerns about the President's attacks on the NRC independence.

Commissioner Crowell, would it be safe to assume that a significant reduction in staff would impact the NRC's ability to adequately assess the safety of nuclear reactors and nuclear materials?

Mr. Crowell. Yes. And it has an impact on our ability to hire and retain future employees.

Mr. Menendez. Correct, because this entire attack on our public workforce has been problematic in bringing people back.

So the NRC needs to be fully staffed with experts who have safety at the forefront to carry out the regulator's mission. Is that correct?

Mr. Crowell. Yes.

Mr. Menendez. But since President Trump took office, over 400 employees have left the NRC, according to a ProPublica report on DOGE at NRC. Some of the most significant losses are on

teams that handle safety. And the NRC has been slow to hire replacement staff, with only 60 new staff hired within the first year of the Trump administration.

Commissioner Crowell, you mentioned earlier that what keeps you up at night is whether the NRC is doing enough to support staff to meet the Commission's mission. Is that correct?

Mr. Crowell. That is correct.

Mr. Menendez. Can you expand on that?

Mr. Crowell. So you are correct in that we have lost close to 500 staff. Over the last 15 months, we have hired around 60-something. If you look on USAJOBS, we have only got a dozen or so openings listed, most of those are for lawyers, that is not the most critical need we have at the agency. So, you know, if we don't start hiring more quickly for the types of skill sets we need, we are going to have trouble fulfilling our mission and ensuring that safety and security that we are responsible before.

Mr. Menendez. I appreciate it.

And speaking of lawyers, Seth Cohen, a lawyer who previously had no significant experience in nuclear law or policy, said that the goal was to turn the NRC into a, quote, rubber stamp for this administration.

For everyone, just yes or no, do you believe that Trump's attacks on the NRC's independence and staffing cuts undermines the public's confidence in the NRC and the safety of nuclear energy? Just yes or no, I am going to go down the line.

Mr. Wright. As far as being independent, we are --

Mr. Menendez. Just yes or no, Trump's actions and in the staffing cuts, do you think that undermines public confidence in the NRC and in nuclear energy? Just yes or no.

We will go down the line.

Mr. Wright. It is kind of a trick question.

Mr. Crowell. Very possible.

Mr. Nieh. Sir, I don't believe there are attacks on the NRC.

Mr. Crowell. Well, the commissioner was fired before his term ended. Would you not consider that an attack on the independence of the NRC?

Mr. Nieh. Sir, that was a decision by the President of the United States.

Mr. Marzano. [Inaudible] Amongst many other challenges -- wherever that may come from, the undermining of the independence of the NRC undermines the goals we are trying to achieve.

Mr. Weaver. Since I have been on the Commission for the last 4 months, I am not aware of any attacks, and I don't feel --

Mr. Menendez. Well, I think it does undermine, and that is the problem, because we can all agree that the NRC's independence is essential to keeping our community safe. But commissioners are publicly testifying that they fear retaliation for going against the President's wishes; where 400 career staff at the NRC have left since President Trump took office, they have not been replaced; those in charge of overseeing staffing changes at the NRC have been quoted saying that the goal is to make the regulator a rubber stamp, all while nuclear is increasingly viewed as a key piece to meeting our growing energy demand.

So this is a bipartisan issue that we all should be working on, but I think we have to be cognizant and aware that the President's undermining these efforts with his actions at the NRC and is undermining public confidence in you all and in nuclear energy.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you. The gentleman yields back.

And the subcommittee is going to --

Mr. Wright. Could I respond very quickly?

Mr. Latta. Well, if you can after we get back, because we are going to take a brief recess and we are going to reconvene 10 minutes after the second vote starts.

Thank you.

[Recess.]

RPTR DEAN

EDTR HOFSTAD

[12:15 p.m.]

Mr. Latta. Well, good afternoon. The subcommittee will come to order.

And the chair will recognize the gentleman from Texas's 11th District for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Pfluger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I appreciate the commissioners for the work you do, and get a lot of compliments from a lot of people on now moving a little bit more at the speed of need and getting things processed.

We have an important project that you all have approved and issued a license to at Abilene Christian University for the construction of the small molten salt reactor, and I am very proud of what Abilene Christian and the Natura public-private partnership has done on that. It really marks the first permit for a liquid-fueled advanced reactor and only the second for any advanced reactor issued by you, by the NRC.

So, Chairman Nieh, now that ACU's partner, Natura, has demonstrated this and it is part of the DOE pilot program, can you provide a little bit of a clarification and remarks as to how licensing under that pilot program for the demonstration reactor will translate or carry over into NRC licensing for the build-out of a commercial reactor?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman.

As I mentioned in the earlier session, we, the NRC, will use information from the DOE pilot projects to support NRC review for commercial deployment, and what we will do is use that information efficiently. We won't, you know, redo the work, but we will validate that it meets NRC requirements.

Mr. Pfluger. I think that has been the frustration of any government bureaucracy, is the relitigating of things that have already been discussed and going from one agency to another. And

very much appreciated.

And there are industries beyond the nuclear energy where high-consequence activities are undertaken every day -- oil and gas, just to name a few, aerospace defense -- and the equipment and the components used in these industries are manufactured with safety and with quality at the forefront.

And the nuclear industry supply chain is unique in that the safety-related structures and systems and components can generally only be provided by a very small pool of suppliers, but they have adopted the NQA-1 quality measurement standard. And this has the effect of constraining the industry on its supply chain.

Can you maybe address some of the actions that have been taken to the potential use of alternative quality management systems, such as those used in other critical industries, for supplying safety-related or structure systems and other components to the nuclear industry specifically?

Mr. Nieh. Yes, sir. There are already existing provisions in NRC requirements where, through classification of safety systems, they can use commercial-grade items, provided they, you know, move through a structured process to determine the components' safety significance.

What we are doing further than that in these rules that we are developing under the executive order, we are taking that same concept to be able to apply flexibility so that designers of nuclear systems and applicants can really focus their attention on what is most important to safety in terms of the quality assurance requirements for safety-related components.

So we already do that in our frameworks already, and we are taking that and expanding it further into the licensing process. Again, this is going to help really accelerate the deployment safely.

Because we just want to make sure that the components that are most important to safety are the ones that have high levels of quality. There are other things that may have functions that are less important to safety that commercial-grade could be sufficient.

Mr. Pfluger. Chairman, as we have talked about here, there are several pieces of legislation that we have passed in the past couple years with the intent of allowing us to compete, to move quicker, to be more efficient. You have just answered several questions on that.

What is it that will get us to that A-plus grade? Because I am worried about the amount of electrons that are being generated and any demand that we see increasing. That is a good problem for us to have, but we have to compete worldwide. And what gets us to the A-plus level that we are not doing, whether it is us or you or the Department of Energy?

Mr. Nieh. Well, anything that gets to shovels in the ground to starting construction safely, with, you know, NRC approvals of applications that come before us.

We are doing the groundwork now to develop these licensing frameworks that are going to provide a wide variety of options for different types of use cases, deployment models, design maturities, to come to the NRC and experience a disciplined and predictable process with a robust safety decision. So those options are going to be available once we complete our rulemaking activities.

The NRC, we are waiting for more applications. You know, we are open for business. We are developing the workforce and the technical competence to be able to do that. And under the Executive Director's leadership, we are implementing a structured and disciplined management model to really execute our safety mission with discipline.

Mr. Pfluger. What percentage of the grid in the future should be serviced by nuclear?

Mr. Nieh. What?

Ms. Pfluger. What percentage of our grid should be serviced, in a perfect world, by the nuclear component?

Mr. Nieh. I can't give a number there. I really think that is for the, you know, energy providers to really decide. But whatever they decide upon, if it is nuclear, we will be ready for it.

Mr. Pfluger. I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. Latta. Thank you very much.

The gentleman yields back.

And the chair recognizes the gentleman from California's 15th District for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. Mullin. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Commissioners, for your testimony.

So California and the San Francisco Bay area, which I am proud to represent, are home to many startups developing the next generation of fission technology, also known as advanced nuclear reactors. Their designs are fundamentally different from legacy reactors and encompass a variety of technologies that have the potential to be safer.

While our existing regulations were not designed for these technologies, I am encouraged by your Commission's recently introduced Part 53 regulations which could give our innovators more flexibility and predictability. However, widespread deployment can only be achieved if the public trusts the review the process.

So, Chairman Nieh, as the Commission begins implementing Part 53, how will you ensure transparency and independence in the process?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman.

Through the NRC's licensing process, the NRC staff makes many -- all of its meetings, essentially, publicly available unless they are specifically closed when proprietary information is discussed.

I assure you that we will continue that same process, to have all our discussions with applicants being done in the public. Of course, members of the public have opportunities to participate in the contested hearing process as well. So those are -- that is not changing.

Mr. Mullin. Thank you for that.

The U.S. has not had a nuclear accident in nearly 50 years, in large part thanks to the

Commission's work and the industry's uncompromising focus on safety. I fully support our innovators and want to make sure that they are part of this safety culture.

So, Chairman, again, could you discuss the importance of the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations in creating this culture and where innovative startups can play an important role?

Mr. Nieh. Yes. Thank you for the question. And I can speak from a very unique position because I worked at the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations for a brief period of time before returning to the Commission.

The high levels of safety that exists today and reliability in the operating nuclear power plants have really been made possible by the work of INPO.

Of course, it is a larger ecosystem when you are talking about nuclear safety and reliability; the NRC has a role, the license holders have a role, as well as INPO.

But I assure you that INPO's processes are, you know, focused on safe and reliable operation and achieving a level of excellence in nuclear power operations. And I think that they have provided extraordinary benefit to America, because the operating fleets today are operating at levels of safety and reliability that are the highest they have been in a long time.

And I know the dedicated staff at INPO really take their mission to heart in doing their evaluations of the performance of the operating reactors.

So I think INPO has a role in the future.

Mr. Mullin. Thank you for that.

And I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you very much.

The gentleman yields back.

And the chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Tennessee's First District for 5 minutes for questions.

Mrs. Harshbarger. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I understand that the Commission is updating its regulations with the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, and my understanding is that these changes will direct ACRS advice to focus on the most important novel and safety-significant issues.

So, Chairman Nieh, can you share why this is so important and, after more than half a century of business-as-usual, what the urgency is for the NRC and ACRS to change their approach?

Mr. Nieh. Yes. Thank you, Congresswoman.

The importance of the ACRS reviews and input into the licensing and decision process is very important, especially for new and novel technologies. Now that we have gained so much experience over the decades of existing technologies, their role is not really that important anymore, so having the ACRS focus on new and novel things --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah.

Mr. Nieh. -- that we have not encountered is very important.

Having them operate efficiently --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yes.

Mr. Nieh. -- is also important, because, as you know, the ACRS review contributes to the overall time it takes to complete a licensing decision.

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yes.

Mr. Nieh. So I can share with you that the ACRS, on its own initiative, has taken steps to be more efficient and focused their activities on what is required.

And, through these rulemakings, we will further solidify that in the NRC's regulations, to make sure that the ACRS focus on statutory mandates --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah.

Mr. Nieh. -- again, nothing more, nothing less -- and then focusing their reviews on matters related to nuclear safety.

Mrs. Harshbarger. Okay.

Do you think that a clarification in law, one that says that ACRS should focus on new safety-significant designs, could help put safety first and get the best work out of the committee?

Mr. Nieh. I believe anytime laws can be clarified it would be helpful.

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah, that is a novel idea, isn't it?

In my district, we have a project to produce highly enriched uranium for Naval reactors. It is under the NNSA's Defense Fuels Program. It is critical to our national defense, and this will be the first time since 1992 that our country will begin enriching uranium to HEU levels.

From my understanding, they are already in early talks with the NRC, even before a formal application has been filed.

So, Commissioner Wright, with so many new rulemakings from the Commission, can you tell me what the NRC's pre-application process looks like? And are companies coming to you with questions about the reforms?

Mr. Wright. So "early engagement" is what I call that, right? And --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah.

Mr. Wright. -- it is really critical for us to -- for people who are looking to do business to come in early and engage with us --

Mrs. Harshbarger. I agree.

Mr. Wright. -- so we can understand what is the new and novel --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah.

Mr. Wright. -- things, what is unique, that maybe -- do we have the expertise to review it, or do we --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Right.

Mr. Wright. -- need to go find that? Or is there something they haven't looked at that they need to go do and supply to us?

And all that does is help the applicant, or potential applicant, and the NRC prepare the most robust application possible, which is going to move everything to the left because it can be reviewed quicker.

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah. I agree.

You know, it is rare to see a Federal agency move with such speed. And we know the window for advancement for energy won't stay open forever, and it will slam shut if we compromise safety and public trust. And I understand the Commission has made significant changes to its Reactor Oversight Process.

So, Commissioner Wright, can you tell me how the Commission conducts its baseline inspections today compared to prior practices? And what drove those changes?

Mr. Wright. So the ROP is a living document, and it can change --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah.

Mr. Wright. -- over time. You have had improvements in the plant operation. You heard about INPO and --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah.

Mr. Wright. -- what they do. So they have peer review going on as well.

Mrs. Harshbarger. Yeah.

Mr. Wright. So we need to be constantly reviewing in how we can be more efficient and, under our new mission statement, to lean in and enable the safe use and deployment of nuclear technologies. And I think, through the ROP and the changes that we are making, it -- we are not cutting safety here --

Mrs. Harshbarger. Right.

Mr. Wright. -- at all. In fact, we are still going to have two resident inspectors in every plant in this country. Nobody is getting rid of that. But it is allowing our inspectors to do and to follow the most safety-significant issues in areas in plant operation.

Mrs. Harshbarger. Well, I have lots more questions, but I will enter them into the record for you.

[The information follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

Mrs. Harshbarger. So thank you, sir, for answering.

And I will yield back.

Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much.

The gentlelady yields back.

And the chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Virginia's Fourth District for 5 minutes for questions.

Ms. McClellan. Thank you, Chairman Latta and Ranking Member Castor, for holding this hearing.

And thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Any coherent strategy to boost American energy independence, improve energy reliability, and drive down energy costs for the American people involves a robust, well-regulated, and safe nuclear energy sector. And, to that extent, an independent and well-resourced Nuclear Regulatory Commission is critical in supporting the renewed growth of this industry and ensuring that we are keeping safety top of mind.

So I am concerned by recent actions from the Trump administration that undermine this independence of the NRC, particularly Executive Orders 14300 and 14301, which seek to impose structural changes and reforms to the NRC and shift oversight authority of the development and construction of advanced nuclear test reactors from the NRC to the Department of Energy.

These reforms flout congressional intent that the NRC function independent of the Department of Energy, is staffed by technical experts that possess the critical knowledge to oversee and regulate this important industry. And efforts to reduce the NRC's independence weaken our ability to effectively regulate the industry, undermine public perception that nuclear energy is safe, reliable, and robustly regulated.

And these concerns have been compounded by a proposed 8-percent reduction in the NRC's

budget and a staffing cut of 196 full-time positions, outlined in the fiscal year 2027 budget request released earlier this month.

So I want to pick up with the witnesses where Ranking Member Pallone left off and ask about NRC's changes to the Reactor Oversight Process, its inspection program for existing operating nuclear reactors.

Now, I understand that the cumulative changes to the ROP will result in a 38-percent reduction in inspection hours, including a 48-percent reduction in inspection hours for security and a 56-percent reduction in inspection hours for emergency preparedness. While there is always room for efficiency, I highly doubt that there is a room for a 38-percent reduction while maintaining our reactor fleet's current safety standards.

And I am concerned that the NRC has gone through a tremendous loss of staff in just over the last 15 months and, with this ROP change, partnered with the agency's reorganization, we will see further shedding of knowledge that the Commission cannot afford. And I understand the Commission's plan to convert many of these employees currently working on inspections to work on new reactor licenses, but I am concerned that these are very different skill sets.

So, Commissioner Crowell, can staff currently working as inspectors transition easily into headquarters roles focusing on reactor licensing, or are you afraid that the Commission will lose further valuable staff expertise as a result of this reorganization?

Mr. Crowell. I thank you for the question.

It is certainly possible and has happened in the past, but it is not necessarily easy to move from one discipline to the other. And I can say right now, I haven't seen a lot of appetite from inspection staff that are impacted by our reorganization to necessarily want to move into other areas.

But, to the extent they do, we will make sure they are successful in that regard. So -- yeah.

Ms. McClellan. Thank you.

And if we see the current wave of interest in nuclear energy actually materialize in the form of operating reactors, then 10 years from now you are going to have fewer staff trying to oversee and inspect many, many more reactors.

So, Commissioner Crowell, how should the Commission allocate resources between reactor licensing and reactor oversight? And how should that allocation of resources shift if and when new advanced nuclear reactors come on line?

Mr. Crowell. It certainly needs to be balanced as appropriate. My concern in the near term is that we are moving too aggressively too quickly.

In terms of the oversight program, the Commission ultimately approved scaling back that, even further than the staff recommended. That concerns me, because we don't have the experience yet of working with these new reactor technologies to know exactly how best to apply the current reactor oversight program or a tailored oversight program.

And, again, the existing fleet, their record of success and safety is due to the oversight responsibilities -- oversight programs, not in spite of them.

Ms. McClellan. That is right.

And, Chairman Nieh, for the record -- because I don't think you will have enough time to answer -- we have seen an increased number of cybersecurity threats to energy infrastructure.

So can you submit for the record how these changes to the NRC's ROP and security inspection protocols will impact cybersecurity oversight and how the NRC will work to ensure its cybersecurity inspection protocols remain robust enough to ensure our Nation's nuclear power plants follow best practices and are prepared to withstand targeted cyber attacks from line actors?

If you could submit that for the record, I would appreciate it.

[The information follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

Ms. McClellan. And, with that, I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you very much.

The gentlelady yields back.

And the chair now recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina's Seventh District for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. Fry. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commissioners, good to see you today.

South Carolina knows the value of nuclear energy. In our State, nuclear power is not theoretical; it is very much a tremendous part of the fabric of who we are. It supports our economy, our grid reliability, and certainly our energy future. South Carolina has been a leader for decades, quite frankly, in this space, and I think we will continue to be.

In the district that I represent, the Robinson Nuclear Plant in Darlington County is a clear example of that value. It supports hundreds of jobs, keeps the lights on across the region, and serves as a major economic anchor in the surrounding community.

Commissioner Wright, good to see you, sir. Thanks for being here today.

I wanted to inquire about the current status of Duke Energy's subsequent license renewal application, which would extend the operating life of the Robinson Plant through 2050. The facility, of course, is a major economic driver for Darlington County and the surrounding communities.

Is there any information that you can share at this time about that application?

Mr. Wright. Well, thank you, one, your comments, and Robinson is very near and dear to me as well. I did my very first resident-for-a-day visit at Robinson and had a great, great time, a great experience working with the staff that -- with the licensees people as well.

So I know they are going through the license renewal right now, and several components to that. And the NRC is -- over the last, I don't know, year or so, we have really leaned in, and the

efficiencies that we have gained in these reviews are moving things along very quickly.

So I can't tell you exactly where the process is, but I can tell you, they are ahead of schedule right now. And so I would look for things happening pretty soon.

Mr. Fry. Great. Thank you so much for that.

On a separate note, Commissioner, as directed by the bipartisan ADVANCE Act, the NRC is moving to expedite licensing at existing sites.

I think this is great news for predictable, efficient regulations -- obviously, I think you all unanimously say that -- cutting the time for licensing well-characterized technologies that can be helpful to employ at existing sites in South Carolina.

Can you describe how leveraging information as part of the licensing basis of an existing site can help expedite future licensing processes?

Mr. Wright. Oh, yeah. I mean, we just have to get -- first, if we stay in our lane and we do what we are supposed to do efficiently and we can reference anything else that is out there that anybody else -- that ground has already been plowed, that helps move things forward.

You have had changes to NEPA, right? We have committed as a Commission and our staff has bought in and made those commitments to shrink the review timelines -- without compromising safety. Safety is our North Star, you know? You have heard me say before, it is our strike zone over home plate. That is not going to change.

So the thing -- and continue to watch what is happening, because we are coming out with these other rulemakings -- Part 53; soon you will see, maybe, Part 57 and the others -- that are going to be adding to the speed and to the momentum that we have here.

Mr. Fry. Thank you for that.

Chairman, you are on the hot seat now. Not really.

Santee Cooper and Brookfield are moving toward completing the two AP1000 units at V.C. Summer, which was, a few years ago, a dirty word in South Carolina. Because the combined

licenses were terminated in 2019, the projects will require new construction and operating license applications.

Given that the site and design have been extensively reviewed before and that the same AP1000 design is now operating at Vogtle, what is the Commission doing to ensure that it can leverage prior work and give applicants a predictable, accelerated pathway rather than a cold start?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman, for the question.

We are thinking about that as well. And recently the NRC staff made publicly available an information paper that describes the different options for situations like the Santee Cooper project as well.

So we do not expect to again retread the tire on this. These units are already operating safely and reliably in Georgia at the Vogtle 3 and 4. There is a certified design that we are updating based on the experience from Vogtle 4. So, should an application come to NRC to resume that, we believe we can do that efficiently.

So we have had some informal discussions about that with the NRC staff, and we --

Mr. Fry. "Efficient government," what an oxymoron. I love it.

Mr. Nieh. It is great. It is unbelievable. You know, I left the government for 5 years and came back to an amazing agency. The turn that this agency has made, to be an enabling regulator, after two decades at this NRC is just incredible. I am so honored to be part of this defining moment for the NRC, along with my colleagues at the Commission.

Mr. Fry. Thank you.

Chairman, Commissioner Wright, and all Commissioners, thank you for being here and your testimony today.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. Latta. The gentleman yields back.

And the chair now recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts' Fourth District for 5

minutes for questions.

Mr. Auchincloss. Thank you, Chairman.

I appreciate the Commissioners' being here.

And I just want to start really by echoing the comments previously made by Congressman Peters, which is to say, you know, as best as possible at a highly partisan moment in Washington, really try to continue to do the work that you have been doing, which is nonpartisan, technically sound, and oriented towards how do we have a nuclear renaissance in this country, which, to lower energy bills, to take bold climate action, we desperately need.

And I have been monitoring closely the rules, the culture, the orientation of NRC, and I think, overall, it is trending in the right direction. So try to continue to do that good work.

Chairman Nieh, let me address my first question to you, regarding ALARA. The NRC plans to start a rulemaking process to revise the NRC's radiation protection regulatory framework, specifically looking at reliance on the linear no-threshold, or LNT, model for radiation exposure and the "as low as reasonably achievable," or ALARA, standard.

I think we need to modernize our radiation protection standards and ensure that the regulations are based on the best available science.

An Idaho National Labs report from last year notes that, for members of the general public, "the current dose limit of 100 millirem per year also appears to be overly restrictive given the lack of observable effects at much-higher levels of natural background radiation experienced by millions of people worldwide."

Chairman Nieh, can you explain why updating these regulations is important, both in terms of reducing the cost of constructing and operating nuclear power plants and in terms of correcting misconceptions about the risks associated with nuclear technology?

Mr. Nieh. Yes. Thank you for the question, Congressman.

It is important because anytime we can have clarity and predictability in our regulatory

frameworks, that makes the regulatory process better.

So I can't comment on the details of this modernization of our radiation protection framework, but what I will say in the context of ALARA: ALARA, that principle is an open-ended expectation that is unbounded, and how you define what is reasonable may be very different than what I define as unreasonable.

So what NRC is doing, consistent with its principles of good regulations, is introducing clarity into its regulatory frameworks to be able to manage, you know, doses, whether it is below or above the limit.

Mr. Auchincloss. So, in terms of achieving that clarity, the Idaho National Labs advised a whole-body dose limit of 5,000 millirems per year and to eliminate all "as low as reasonably achievable" requirements at subsequent limits below that threshold.

Is that the approach that you are planning on taking with the new regulations, or are there other proposals that you are evaluating?

Mr. Nieh. So we are taking an approach -- again, without being able to share the specific details of the rule, we are looking to provide clarity and structure into our rules for radiation protection that will be able to provide greater flexibility and still keep the public's --

Mr. Auchincloss. Right.

Mr. Nieh. -- protection, you know, as a priority.

Mr. Auchincloss. So it sounds like you are taking other proposals into account besides the Idaho National Labs' proposal?

Mr. Nieh. Yes, it is not a carbon-copy of what Idaho --

Mr. Auchincloss. Okay.

Mr. Nieh. -- has suggested.

But what I will say, Congressman, is, when the Commission completes its deliberations, we will timely make that rule publicly available for comment. I believe this is going to be an important

rule that we receive --

Mr. Auchincloss. Very much so.

Mr. Nieh. -- stakeholder comment on.

Mr. Auchincloss. No, I agree.

And, as you said, it is critically important that this is a transparent, apolitical, and scientific process. I think getting this rule right really matters. We know that there is going to be a lot of, you know, swirl around this, and you really have to nail it down scientifically. You have to get input; you have to respond to the input. Otherwise, it could risk public's distrust, and we don't want to do that, because we have momentum. We have more momentum now than we have had in 25 years, probably. So, on this issue, let's really keep it up.

And, you know, as this rule proceeds, I think the next step is, we want to look at codifying it in statue, right? We want to evaluate how the rule -- what it looks like, ultimately. But I think to prevent potential misinterpretations of it down the road, between the EPA and the NRC in particular, probably we are going to have to put updated rules into statute form. And so, please, come to Congress and work with us on that as well.

I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you very much.

The gentleman yields back.

And the chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas's 12th District for 5 minutes for questions.

Oh. The chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado's Eighth District for 5 minutes for questions. Excuse me.

Mr. Evans. Chairman, Ranking Member, thank you so much for this hearing.

Thank you, of course, to our witnesses for taking some time to come.

No question about it, energy demand is only going up in Colorado and across the country.

Electric utilities in my district have told me they are going to need to triple the amount of power over the next 10 years that they have on the grid to meet growing demand, and that is after already doubling in the last 10 years.

But, unfortunately, we have policies in Colorado, from the Democrats that run the State of Colorado, that are going to cost 61 billion additional dollars to push failed energy policies that can't even keep the lights on.

Republicans, the administration and Congress, we are focused on making sure that we have safe, affordable, reliable energy, and nuclear is absolutely key to that approach. We need the baseload, dispatchable power in Colorado to prevent blackouts in the high-demand areas like Denver International Airport and to make sure that we can stop these public-safety power shutoffs. One is happening right now in Colorado because we have an old, weak, dumb grid and generation sources.

But, unfortunately, many folks still oppose nuclear energy out of environmental and safety concerns, even though half of all carbon-free electricity in the United States comes from nuclear generation, and that sounds pretty environmentally friendly to me.

And we also know that it is safe. Somebody who works at a nuclear power plant, a modern nuclear power plant, is exposed to 100 times less radiation on an annual basis than I am just flying back and forth from Colorado to Washington, D.C.

And so, Chairman Nieh, my first question will be to you.

Many folks' understanding of nuclear energy is unfortunately limited to previous disasters.

Now, I know we have talked about safety here, but would love any additional thoughts that you have on why nuclear generation, with today's technology, is safer than ever before; what is the administration doing to increase that safety, to promote that safety; and then, also, the transparency of those safety measures so people can feel secure and confident in modern nuclear technology.

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congressman.

The levels of safety that exist today are -- they exist because of a much broader ecosystem

that I referred to before.

It is the robust regulations and the dedicated staff and inspectors at the NRC and the people that do the licensing work. It is the highly trained and qualified operators that are in the control room operating the facilities. It is the robustly designed facilities themselves. It is the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations.

It is how this industry, this global industry, shares operating experience when things occur at facilities. That information is disseminated very rapidly so people can learn from that experience. And one strength of this industry is that it is a continuous learning organization, and that is one thing that has really been driven into this industry by the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations.

So I believe that, you know, this -- when you look at the data of safety performance in terms of the number of unplanned shutdowns, unplanned power changes, number of consequential events, safety-significant inspection findings, they are all trending in a direction that shows very high levels of safety performance.

So it is really a -- it is a team sport in nuclear safety, and it is not just the Federal Government; it is the Federal Government and the industry itself.

Mr. Evans. So something that sticks out in people's minds from 40 or 50 years ago in terms of things that went wrong at nuclear facilities, that just -- is that really something that can even happen today, with the combination of technology and cultural advancements in the safety space that we have made?

Mr. Nieh. We have learned a lot, Congressman. And now many of the advanced designs, including the Vogtle 3 and 4 AP1000s, use passive safety features which do not rely on electric power and pumps and motors to start to protect the core if an event were to occur.

So building it into the design, as well as maintaining and building on this high level of performance, is something that, you know, makes nuclear safe. And, as well, this is why we exist as the NRC, to ensure that it continues to be safe.

Mr. Evans. Excellent.

To make sure that we have more nuclear, we know we need permitting reform. I am actually one of the co-leads, with one of my colleagues, Rep. Peters across the aisle, for a permitting reform framework that includes a provision to end uncontested, mandatory NRC hearings for new reactors.

And, previously, we have heard that this could slash permitting timelines by 6 months without risking safety or oversight engagement.

In my final 20 seconds, can you just speak to that briefly?

Mr. Nieh. Yes. You know, the mandatory hearing process is a vestige of the past. It was a way to get information out there into the public. And we have many means of communication now in the transparency of our licensing processes.

So the NRC is actively looking at streamlining the mandatory hearing process. And, again, there have been proposals, before, for even legislative fixes to that as well.

Mr. Evans. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. Latta. Thank you very much.

The gentleman yields back.

And the chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Washington's Eighth District for 5 minutes for questions.

Ms. Schrier. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our witnesses.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considered the world's gold-standard nuclear regulator. It gives the American public trust in our government to regulate this energy source safely, and we cannot give up that momentum or trust that we have gotten so far to make this topic bipartisan.

But when this President fires and threatens to fire Commissioners and directs them to rubber-stamp projects, it erodes the public's trust for the NRC to work as a dependable and independent regulator. We have seen this in other agencies.

The public just needs to have confidence about safety assurances. And those assurances on safety will allow even more bipartisanship here in committee, like the ADVANCE Act. So I want to thank you all for your independence and work during this time of change.

I would like to transition to the licensing process and some red tape. And we just heard some of this, about the mandatory hearing requirement. I believe -- and you just heard that it is one good place to start.

Even when no one is contesting the approval of a license for a reactor, NRC still has to hold this unnecessary hearing that takes thousands of NRC man-hours and months to prepare for.

And so, to start, I would love to just go down the line. We already got your opinion, Mr. Chairman, but we will do it with you too. Just yes or no, do you support dropping the requirement for mandatory hearing in the licensing process when there is no opposition?

Mr. Wright. Absolutely.

Mr. Crowell. Yes.

Mr. Nieh. Yes.

Mr. Marzano. Yes.

Mr. Weaver. Yes.

Ms. Schrier. I love that unanimity. Thank you.

You should know that I was proud to introduce H.R. 5549, the Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act, with Representatives Griffith and Veasey, which would do just that. My bill cuts red tape by dropping the mandatory hearing requirement when no one objects to the project and only after environmental and safety reviews where public consultation is required.

I would encourage the chair and ranking member to consider taking up this needed reform

that is bipartisan.

Now, I would love to just pivot to fuel supply here in the United States. We talk a lot about national security and domestic supply chain. It is feeling increasingly urgent, as our geopolitical adversaries dominate the global supply chain, while nuclear energy demand is getting more and more support and is growing in the United States and abroad.

And on the enrichment step of the fuel cycle, Russia has 45 percent of the world's uranium enrichment capacity, and the U.S. has only one enrichment plant at this point.

Thanks to bipartisan action here, DOE just awarded $2.7 billion for the U.S. to build out HALEU and LEU enrichment critical for our supply chains and security and advancing energy independence.

RPTR KRAMER

EDTR HOFSTAD

[12:55 p.m.]

Ms. Schrier. Commissioner Crowell, what reforms in Congress would help ensure that we can get these domestic commercial enrichment facilities up and running as quickly and safely as possible while prioritizing your safety mission?

Mr. Crowell. Thank you for the question.

I am not sure I am familiar with all the proposals before Congress, but I can assure you that, from the NRC's regulatory perspective, fuel facilities at the front end of the fuel cycle are squarely in our purview in terms of expediting that process.

This country is long overdue in getting its fuel supply secure. And if we don't do it now, we are never going to. And we desperately need it because it is the key to the renaissance that we hope to see.

Ms. Schrier. I agree.

And there are ways of building facilities even before the whole permitting process is through. I don't know if any of you want to comment on that idea. It doesn't compromise safety.

Go right ahead, Commissioner Weaver.

Mr. Weaver. Yeah. Thank you, Representative.

So the mandatory hearing also applies to enrichment facilities because of Section 193 of the Atomic Energy Act. So that is one opportunity.

In addition, enrichment facilities are held to a higher account, and they are not allowed to start construction at risk, where other fuel facilities can. So, while we have this impending Russian uranium ban coming, we can't -- we can't even start. So that is another area where we could use some help.

Ms. Schrier. I agree. I feel that that seems commonsense, doesn't compromise safety. It

allows progress, you know, kind of simultaneously with the permitting process. And nothing is going to be permitted if it is not safe.

So I am over time. I yield back. Thank you very much.

Mr. Weber. [Presiding.] The gentlelady yields back.

The chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes.

This is a question for all of you guys -- I will use that term -- all the witnesses.

NRC has published a number of final and proposed rules to implement the requirements of Executive Order 14300 -- are you all familiar with that executive order? Good -- ordering the reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, quote/unquote.

So my question is -- and we will start down on the end with you, Commissioner Wright -- how far is the NRC into that process of overhauling its regulations to achieve that goal?

Mr. Wright. Thank you.

We have a number of rulemakings right now that are going through. I want to say we are -- it is 31 to 36-ish, if I am -- subject to check. And we are moving forward very quickly on this and very efficiently as well.

So stay tuned. You know, we are dropping them once -- you know, they have already dropped -- like, 53 has already dropped. We have others right behind it.

Mr. Weber. Commissioner?

Mr. Crowell. To build on what my colleague said, we are on track to finish by the timeline set in the executive order of late this year.

Mr. Weber. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Nieh. Yes, sir. We are very far down the process of implementing those provisions in the executive order that you reference. There are sections 5 Alfa through 5 Juliett, J, that we consider to be the most significant ones, and we are on track to have those in final form by the end of this year.

Mr. Weber. All right.

Commissioner?

Mr. Marzano. I agree.

And I want to thank my colleagues for all of the work that we have done over the past few months, because -- and, of course, NRC staff as well, because they responded to the executive order's directives very forthright and have set up the Commission to be well on the way to approving those over the next few months.

So I agree with my colleagues on that.

Mr. Weber. And, finally, Commissioner Weaver?

Mr. Weaver. Yes, sir. The ADVANCE Act actually got the staff started on microreactor rulemaking early. And that is one of the first proposed rules that I looked at when I took my role on the Commission. It was -- I think it is a well-based rule, and you will see that soon.

And I agree with the other comments that my fellow Commissioners have made.

Mr. Weber. Well, you must be reading my mail here, because you are asking the next question I was going to ask.

What is the most meaningful change that you all are embarking on in response to these -- you have named one.

Let's go to you, Mr. Marzano. What do you think? The most meaningful change in you all's process.

Mr. Marzano. I mean, there is a lot. I will say, I do want to kind of highlight our cooperation with the Department of Energy on the development of test reactors, et cetera.

In 2019, Congress passed the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act that truly envisioned this cooperation between NRC and DOE in demonstrating reactors and getting them commercialized, and I think what you are seeing now is the fruits of that labor.

And so I am very encouraged that we will be able to effectively manage conflicts of interest,

those kinds of things, and our own independence in that process. And so I think that that has been one of the most transformational aspects of our --

Mr. Weber. Okay.

Mr. Chairman, to you.

Mr. Nieh. Yes, sir. There are, again, so many, it is hard to just pick one. But I would just maybe give you a few flavors.

The optionality that we are providing for applicants is going to be very, very significant.

The other part is also using risk-informed approaches in our licensing frameworks to give flexibility for applications to meet performance objectives instead of having prescriptive requirements. So that is a great one.

And then one that is more practical in terms of accelerating licensing, all the things that we are doing to streamline our environmental reviews.

Mr. Weber. Okay. Good.

Mr. Crowell?

Mr. Crowell. To add to the list of importance, as my colleagues have said, I would add the efforts we are doing to streamline and make the front end of the fuel cycle more efficient. If we don't succeed there -- without fuel, we are not going to have any more nuclear power. So we need to have that in place.

Mr. Weber. Mr. Wright?

Mr. Wright. I want to give you two things.

One, the mission statement itself was big. And everything that the executive orders are calling for, the mission statement -- it all falls underneath that.

And then the second is, a full Commission. We have a full Commission again. You know, when we were down to three, it is hard. With five, it makes it work.

Mr. Weber. Okay.

Mr. Chairman, this is for you, to start with. What about this process keeps you up at night?

Mr. Nieh. Ha. Well --

Mr. Weber. You are wondering, how much time do we have?

Mr. Nieh. Yeah. I actually -- I actually can't wait to get to work the next day to keep going on these things.

You know, the things that I guess keep me up at night is really the dedicated staff at the NRC. You know, they are working so hard. These are among the most dedicated people I have ever worked with in my entire career. And I want to make sure that they have the knowledge, the skills, and the resources to be able to get the job done.

So I think about the team at the NRC.

Mr. Weber. Okay.

Well, that is my time. Thank you for that.

I am going to yield back and recognize the gentlelady from Texas for at least 5 minutes.

Mrs. Fletcher. Well, thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our witnesses for being here with us today and for dedicating your careers to the safety of nuclear energy in our country.

Like many of my colleagues, I have been deeply concerned about the independence of the NRC, especially given the pressure from the White House, the Department of Energy, and the so-called DOGE effort.

Since President Trump took office last year, we have seen a consistent campaign of consolidating power in the White House. It is not limited to the NRC but certainly we have seen an overall effort to weaken independent agencies. And several former NRC officials have publicly warned that this type of intervention at the NRC will pose serious safety risks and slow the deployment of nuclear energy.

So everyone in this room -- everyone who is left and everyone who regularly serves on this

committee -- knows that we need urgently to get more generation on line to meet growing demand. We have had hearing after hearing about that. And it is hugely important, but it can't be an excuse to create a regulatory process that is influenced by politics. And this industry, in particular, cannot afford to lose public trust, as you all know.

Last week, during a hearing before this committee, Energy Secretary Wright rebuked a DOE employee, Seth Cohen, who had proclaimed -- and I think you all probably know this, but just to make sure -- proclaimed that the NRC would do whatever DOE told it to do.

And I heard you, Commissioner Marzano, talking about the good collaboration between DOE and NRC. So, you know, obviously, that is a good sign. But I am concerned about the statement. I am very glad that the Secretary said he didn't agree with the statement, certainly. But it is still a concern, that he could have that influence and that that kind of attitude could pervade the thinking.

And so, you know, right now, his LinkedIn profile says that he is simultaneously working at DOE, NASA, and the NRC.

So, Chairman Nieh, can you confirm if Mr. Cohen is an employee of NRC? And do you agree with his comments that -- and this is a quote -- "the NRC is going to do whatever we tell the NRC to do," with the "we" being the Department of Energy?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congresswoman, for the question.

I can confirm that Mr. Cohen is a DOE employee who is on detail to the NRC.

My experience with Mr. Cohen is the exact opposite of what was described. I heard the Energy Secretary say last week that he is passionate about implementing the executive order and seeing the safe deployment of nuclear energy. That has been my experience with Mr. Cohen.

I have only spoken with him maybe a couple times, by video. I don't believe he is in the area here. But what I have seen in my interactions with Mr. Cohen is that he has given some innovative thinking, some new ideas to the NRC. I am not seeing or hearing any of the things that were said in the last year.

So --

Mrs. Fletcher. Okay. Well --

Mr. Nieh. -- this belief that that is happening at the NRC, that is just not true.

Mrs. Fletcher. Well, thank you for that, Mr. Chairman.

And I do hope you all can see why that is a concern, and I hope you share that concern. I see your heads nodding, so I am going to take it in the affirmative that everyone shares that concern.

So, Mr. Chairman, with that, I also want to give you an opportunity to clarify a little bit, adding to what you just said, about how the NRC is working together with the DOE, specifically on the reactor pilot program.

Can you talk about how the NRC staff that are detailed to the Department are helping the Department?

Mr. Nieh. Yes, I can. And I just had a very one-on-one engagement with one of our details from the NRC over to the Department of Energy.

And what NRC is doing is observing the DOE authorization process and providing technical input and insights into how the design is maturing and how it could transition over to licensing for the NRC.

And I will give you a real example. So this staff member was observing the testing of an important component for a design, the shutdown control rod system, and he noticed something about the reliability of the system and the tests that they were performing and had some questions. And, based on that input, DOE performed additional tests to confirm the reliability of the system.

And that is how NRC is adding value. This whole thing that the DOE is doing to test these reactors, it is what we need to do as a country to test these technologies before they go down the pathway for commercialization.

So, from my perspective, Congresswoman, we are doing what we need to do as a unified Federal Government to deploy nuclear technology safely in America.

Mrs. Fletcher. Okay. Well, thank you, Chairman Nieh.

And I think I have time to get one more thing in here, which is: I know, earlier this month, the NRC published a draft rule that governed how the Commission would assess reactor designs that had previously gone through authorization by DOE and DOD.

And so, Chairman Nieh, can you just confirm that the proposed rule would put the onus on reactor applicants to detail how reviews by DOE and DOD adhere to the NRC's safety and testing requirements and that they aren't getting a special fast pass?

Mr. Nieh. That is correct. Any applicant has to demonstrate that it meets NRC's requirements, with information to support --

Mrs. Fletcher. Okay.

Well, thank you so much. I have gone over my time. Thank you all again for your testimony and for your work.

And, with that, Madam Chair, I will yield back.

Ms. Lee. [Presiding.] Well, thank you all for being here today.

I now actually recognize myself for my 5 minutes of questioning.

We are at a pivotal moment for American energy policy. As energy demand continues to grow, Congress and the administration have both taken steps to accelerate the deployment of nuclear technologies through the ADVANCE Act and also recent executive orders.

But with that momentum comes our central challenge: ensuring that efforts to increase efficiency and speed do not come at the expense of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's core mission of safety, independence, and public trust.

Deploying and expanding the NRC's ability to effectively coordinate with partners like the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense while still maintaining its independent regulatory authority will be critical.

I appreciate you all being here with us today and providing us with your insight and your

expertise.

I would like to start with a question for you, Commissioner Wright.

Following the completion of phased cybersecurity inspections and their integration into the Reactor Oversight Process in 2022, how is the Nuclear Regulatory Commission evaluating whether emerging cyber threats warrant updates or enhancements to its current cyber framework?

Mr. Wright. Cyber is a -- cyber is a thing. And if you are not careful, it can turn into a black hole for cost and things like that.

I do know that we are staying in touch with every agency that has anything to say about this and that we are working closely with our inside people to make sure that we are doing it right, that it is structured correctly, right, that it is right-sized as well. Because we have to take serious what could happen and what is out there.

I feel very confident right now that where we are at as an agency and where we are at working with our licensees, that we are in a pretty good spot. But we are still working toward making things more efficient.

Ms. Lee. I know the Commission developed a cybersecurity roadmap back in 2017.

Mr. Wright. Yes.

Ms. Lee. Do you believe it is necessary? Or are you already working on any sort of update to that roadmap?

Mr. Wright. Yes, I believe, subject to check, that that is happening. Yes, there is -- that it is under review.

Ms. Lee. Chairman Nieh, then, back to you, do you have anything to add on the questions that I just directed to Commissioner Wright about the current cybersecurity posture and the 2017 roadmap?

Mr. Nieh. Yes. Regulatory controls are in place for robust protection against cyber threats. The NRC continuously monitors information on threats, including cyber, and the NRC has processes

to update what it believes are the current levels of threat, and, again, including cyber. And we exercise that process, and we will adjust our regulatory frameworks accordingly.

Ms. Lee. And, Chairman Nieh, Congress directed the Commission, through the ADVANCE Act, to enable efficient, predictable, and timely licensing while maintaining safety.

Executive Order 14300 builds on that by accelerating timelines, streamlining reviews, and restructuring the agency.

How do you see these directives working together in practice?

Mr. Nieh. They work hand-in-hand. They are complementary. The timelines that were driven by NEIMA and further complemented by the executive order, we are already working toward that. We are building review schedules to meet those timelines and, in some cases, beating those timelines.

This is how much change is happening at the NRC. We have made so many improvements into how we actually make the decision, focusing on what is most important for safety. And for things that don't materially contribute to mission outcomes, we are not doing those things anymore. We are eliminating the unnecessary conservatism and those aspects of the review that aren't relevant to the safety decision. And we are applying risk-informed approaches as well.

Ms. Lee. Do you believe any additional congressional action is necessary to reconcile or clarify these directives?

Mr. Nieh. I would like to maybe respond on the record for that to give that more thought.

[The information follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

Ms. Lee. All right.

Well, thank you all for being here and for your testimony here today.

At this time, I will recognize the gentleman from Texas for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. Veasey. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Today's hearing, I think, is very important, and I think that any future hearings on this topic are hugely important, because I really do believe that we are headed towards, you know, a calamity if we don't act soon.

I think the electrification issue in this country is something that needs to be addressed immediately. You know, we have the driverless cars, for instance, that are all-electric in Austin, and you see them everywhere in downtown Austin. And I live 3 hours from Austin, I live in Fort Worth, but I was in Los Angeles; they were everywhere. And with people moving more and more into these products, and with everything else that is happening, with the controversy around data centers, we are just going to need more energy, more electrification. And I think that nuclear has to be a part of that mix. We are not going to get around the nuclear piece.

We are the number-one producer of renewable energy in this country, in Texas. And even with the large amounts that we produce in the Lone Star State, it is not going to be enough for everything that we need in a State of 30-plus-million people. And so we have to have real power that is showing up for the American public each and every day.

And we need to be honest about another major benefit: that nuclear energy helps protect U.S. consumers from price spikes. When crude and natural gas prices started to surge because of this war that is being fought right now in Iran, you started to see everybody's utility bills go up, their gas bills go up, and grid operators are also going to feel the squeeze.

Nuclear plants, once they get operating, they really do provide a very stable cost over long-term horizons and can reduce over-reliance on volatile commodity markets. And in places like

Texas and nationwide, I think that that is going to matter a lot.

And so the challenge before us, I believe, is clear: Can America scale nuclear deployment while preserving the gold standard of safety? And I believe that we can do that.

Congress has acted in bipartisan ways before to modernize licensing and help move these technologies forward, but laws on paper are not enough. Implementation is really what counts. And so that is going to be the challenge, is making sure that we have a nimble and efficient NRC that can really help us. Otherwise, I think that we could be headed toward some sort of a paralysis, and that is not going to be good.

I wanted to ask the question, how do we move faster without moving recklessly? Does anyone just have any thoughts on that? That would be great.

Yes?

Mr. Marzano. I will go back to one thing that was kind of glossed over at one point.

The staff have recently issued an information paper in anticipation of the AP1000 design change rule that is coming to the Commission.

Looking back to the last renaissance, there was a number of licensing actions, various early site permits, combined operating license applications that have been approved but have gone stale at this point. And I think picking up on where the agency left off and where we see interest and reinvigorating these projects that were once envisioned, that is the kind of low-hanging fruit, I think, that we can see right now, where there is significant NRC staff resource that has already been put into evaluating those applications.

And so I think we start, in terms of new construction, looking at what has already been done. And then, of course, plant restarts is another big area, and uprates.

So we have a lot of, in the near term, solutions that the NRC can be a part of in helping address bringing electrons to the grid faster.

Mr. Veasey. Yeah. Yeah.

Let me ask you this. And anyone can jump in and answer this. From a national security standpoint, do you think that it is important that, when it comes to being able to deploy nuclear quickly and efficiently and safely, that the U.S. lead in that area? Or does it really not matter if other countries are doing it more quickly and more efficiently than us?

Mr. Nieh. Sir, if I may --

Mr. Veasey. Yeah.

Mr. Nieh. -- yes, I believe it is important for national security. Our energy security is our national security as well. What we do here, we can help our allies around the world. And, again, I think it is important for national security.

Just to add on to your previous question, what can make things go faster: investing in the people at the NRC. Technical competence, the leaders, our operations, with discipline and efficiency in how we do business -- these are the investments we have to make in the agency to be able to do these things that America needs right now. And we are doing those things and investing in our people.

Mr. Veasey. Yeah. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Lee. I now recognize the Congresswoman from Iowa's First District, Mrs. Miller-Meeks.

Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you, Madam Chairman, for holding this important hearing with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's leadership.

Nuclear energy is reliable, baseload, clean power, and, with hindsight, the wave of retirements over the past decade created real vulnerabilities for our grid. Today, with surging demand from data centers, reshored manufacturing, and electrification, we are paying the price of those decisions.

The good news is that the market has responded. Capital is flowing back into nuclear, and shuttered plants are coming back on line.

Palisades led the way, pioneering a first-of-its-kind process to reverse decommissioning and restart a shuttered reactor. Now, Iowa's own Duane Arnold Energy Center is following suit. NextEra Energy has partnered with Google with a 25-year agreement to restart the 601-megawatt plant, with operations targeted by 2029.

What makes Duane Arnold's restart particularly compelling is the community buy-in. The Linn County Planning and Zoning Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the rezoning, and the project is projected to generate more than $9 billion in economic benefits to Linn County and the State of Iowa over the 25-year operating term.

That is affordable, reliable power with local support -- exactly what energy policy should look like.

I am also impressed by the work the NRC has done since 2025 to make the restart process smoother, implementing the ADVANCE Act and developing the regulatory pathway to restore operating licenses for plants like Duane Arnold and Palisades.

The future of American energy dominance depends on nuclear. Modernizing our licensing process to restart existing plants, build new ones, and champion emerging technologies like small modular reactors is not optional; it is essential.

Commissioner Weaver, can you walk us through how the NRC developed this new restart licensing framework, what went into building it, and how your team ensured that they could meet project deadlines without cutting corners on safety?

Mr. Weaver. Yes. Thank you for that question.

So the framework was put in place before I arrived. However, it is something that I am following closely.

So the NRC created an inspection procedure about 2 years ago. And what we do is, leaders of the program offices and the regional who -- the region that has oversight of the particular project get together and assign a team, with some senior executives in charge, and put together a

multidisciplinary team to manage the restart.

In terms of the details, the licensee will need to look at, what is the status of the equipment, right? How long have they been decommissioned? What needs to be done from a physical plant perspective, but then, also, from a -- to reconstitute the licensing basis, they need to then seek the NRC approvals to switch from a decommissioning to an operating plant status.

Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you.

Commissioner Crowell, the NRC says its revised Reactor Oversight Process will reduce baseline inspection hours by about 38 percent while preserving strong, independent oversight.

How will you ensure those same ADVANCE Act Section 507 principles are applied to Duane Arnold restart inspections across the existing fleet?

Mr. Crowell. Those changes to the Reactor Oversight Process will apply to Duane Arnold just as they apply to the other reactors.

Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Chairman Nieh, the NRC is revising regulations and guidance under Executive Order 14300 and has broader ongoing rulemakings tied to efficiency and timeliness.

Which of those changes will produce the biggest near-term benefit for current light-water reactors and restart projects, not just advanced reactors?

Mr. Nieh. I think the biggest ones are related to the modernization of Part 50 and Part 52. We are considering major revisions to, again, depart from prescriptive regulation to more performance-based and risk-informed approaches.

Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you.

And, Commissioner Wright, the 2024 Memorandum of Cooperation with Canada and the U.K. on advanced reactors and SMRs shows how regulators can work together internationally.

From your perspective, how can these kinds of international partnerships be used not just to share technical reviews but also to advance American innovation and diplomatic leadership in nuclear technology?

Mr. Wright. Thank you for the question.

Well, you know, we are the gold-standard regulator around the world, and the partnerships that we have with our international partners can lead to better global standards as well.

And we have the opportunity, doing that same -- with that engagement, to promote U.S. technologies that have the NRC's seal of approval, right, and they have a design certification with us. That is what people are looking for. And so we can build that 60- to 100-year relationship with our international partners.

And, as you know, we have already shown that this can be done, with the BWRX-300 review.

Mrs. Miller-Meeks. Thank you.

My time has expired. I have some questions that I will submit for the record to Chairman Nieh.

[The information follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

Mrs. Miller-Meeks. And, Madam Chair, I yield back.

Ms. Lee. I now recognize the Representative from North Dakota, Mrs. Fedorchak.

Mrs. Fedorchak. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you all for being here today and sharing your expertise. Thank you for your commitment to this very vital industry.

Chairman, I want to start with you. And, to go a little bit higher-level, I am really intrigued and pleased by the NRC's refocus on a more enabling mission.

Can you just speak briefly about what kind of a sea change that is for the agency and what you are pivoting away from and what this kind of means in a broader sense to the industry as a whole?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you for the question, Congresswoman.

It is a real sea change, and this enabling mindset is something that is really fueling the engine of the work that is occurring at the NRC.

And I mentioned in my opening remarks that enabling is adjusting our frame- -- aligning our regulations with actual risks and operational needs. It is not arbitrarily lowering our standards. It is adapting to new technologies. It is not force-fitting old technologies into old frameworks. And it is adding regulatory flexibility where safety is maintained. It is not preserving longstanding constraints that no longer provide a safety benefit.

Enabling, it is really a mindset. It is not a shortcut. It is not a compromise. It is just how we fulfill our safety authorities to benefit the American people.

Mrs. Fedorchak. Thank you for that, and thank you for your leadership in this area.

I would argue that we need an enabling mindset in energy across the country on all forms and, quite honestly, in all industries in our country, because we are at this critical time where we have a lot of competition from others who don't necessarily share our values. If we are going to

stay ahead in this race and lead the world, we have to move and work and build and grow. And that takes an enabling mindset.

So thank you for showing us the way in your agency.

I would like to talk a little bit about the waste side of things.

And so, for that, first, I will turn to you, Commissioner Wright. You and I share some similar backgrounds, and I have appreciated your friendship over the years.

The United States has tens of thousands of metric tons of spent nuclear fuel sitting in temporary storage, with no permanent disposal solution in sight.

Given that the NRC recently reorganized around nuclear materials and waste as a core business line, what specific regulatory actions is the Commission taking to advance consolidated interim storage licensing?

Mr. Wright. Well, we have already had a couple of applications come through that we have acted on.

You know, we can approve consolidated facilities all day long, we can license them, but it is going to be -- it is not our decision to open them. It is going to be a community decision, a board decision. It could be a, you know, a local decision by a legislature or something.

So, I mean, we have the process to review and to license these facilities, like in Texas and in New Mexico. We did PFS in Utah before that. And the waste thing in general -- you and I both agree on this -- it is not a science issue.

Mrs. Fedorchak. Right.

Separately, does NRC have a regulatory framework ready to support spent-fuel reprocessing if Congress revisits that policy?

Mr. Wright. The answer is, yes, we can do reprocessing under our current regulations. But we also have some stuff that is being rolled out in the rulemakings that will back that up and actually address some of that.

Mrs. Fedorchak. Excellent.

Mr. Chairman, I only have about a minute left, but can you speak to the reprocessing of spent fuel? What do you need from Congress to help facilitate that? Where do you see that going? How can we speed that process up?

Mr. Nieh. Yeah. I will say very briefly, Congresswoman, we are ready. As Commissioner Wright mentioned, we can do that now within our existing framework, but we are working on a more comprehensive and structured approach that will enable the flexibility for an expeditious pathway to license that technology should it come before the agency.

Mrs. Fedorchak. And so what is holding that up? Other countries are doing this. France does a lot of this reprocessing. Where is the holdup in the U.S.?

Mr. Nieh. So the technol- -- it is feasible. As I understand it, this is really a commercial decision to make the investment to pursue these technologies. I am not aware of any policies or legislation that is needed to do it. It is really going to be a business decision.

Mrs. Fedorchak. It is a cost. And so, if there is more demand for this fuel, with more development and building and production on site, then this industry will follow. Is that your --

Mr. Nieh. That is my understanding, yes.

Mrs. Fedorchak. -- expectation? Excellent.

All right. Thank you, gentlemen. Wish we had more time to talk, but appreciate your insights, your experience, and all that you are doing for this industry in the U.S.

I yield back.

Mr. Weber. [Presiding.] The gentlelady yields back.

The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Indiana for at least 5 minutes.

Mrs. Houchin. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. "At least 5 minutes," I love that.

Good afternoon, everyone.

I want to thank Chairman Latta for permitting me to waive on to this Nuclear Regulatory

Commission hearing.

Thank you to the members of the Commission for appearing before the subcommittee today.

Abundant energy is critical for competitiveness and growth in the modern world. The supply and demand of energy dictates household uses, transportation, industrial applications technology, and, yes, even the controversial deployment of data centers. It is essential we get the policy right. How can we produce the right amount of energy and then deliver it to the consumers that need it?

In 2025, Indiana residents experienced a 1-year cost increase of 17.5 percent in their energy bills. Economic development cannot come at the cost of making energy prohibitively expensive for our constituents.

Wind and solar power generation come with some drawbacks. They produce energy when the sun shines and the wind blows, but sometimes they can fail when customers need it most.

Alternatively, nuclear power has the potential to unlock nearly unlimited clean, reliable energy for our country. We can use it to provide affordable, stable, consistent power for consumer, commercial, and national security applications, enabling innovation and growth.

In last year's National Defense Authorization Act, I introduced an amendment to the NDAA that would expand a Navy pilot program to construct small modular nuclear reactors on Department of War property. This commonsense step will help the Navy address the enormous power needs the military applications require for testing and training purposes, and it will expedite the permitting landscape for the deployment of these SMRs.

From these pilots, the Department of War will have adequate stable power for their needs, but private businesses may purchase unused power to jolt additional economic activity. More importantly, the safe, timely deployment of these SMRs can provide a streamlined pathway for the NRC to approve commercial advanced reactor designs.

To that end, Chairman Nieh, could you provide some details on the proposed rule that would provide a pathway that the NRC is considering for streamlined reviews for commercial advanced

reactor designs if they have previously been approved by DOW or DOE?

Mr. Nieh. Thank you, Congresswoman.

Yes, we recently published a draft rule for comment to do exactly what you just described. And it is our intention to be efficient in using the information that comes out of the Department of War or the Department of Energy in one of their projects, because that provides valuable information that would support a license application to the NRC.

What we are not going to do, we are not going to repeat what was already done. We are going to validate that it meets our requirements. And then, for those things that are not done in the DOE or DOW authorization process that are required by NRC, we will focus on those things.

But we will validate the information to support an independent decision that the agency makes on the safety case, and we will look at other things that were not looked at.

Mrs. Houchin. Well, I want to say, I am grateful for that. It does sound like an expedited and safe way to approach this.

We were successful in getting that amendment adopted into the NDAA to give further opportunities for the deployment of small modular reactors on Naval property.

Chairman Nieh, could you discuss mandatory uncontested hearings for nuclear generation? What value do those provide? And do they cause delays in the approval timeline of a project?

Mr. Nieh. Yes, Congresswoman.

The value is limited at this point. With what we know about nuclear energy and availability of the contested hearing process available to the public, there is little value in having the mandatory hearing. All it does is add to the schedule.

Mrs. Houchin. And, finally, if I could ask you and the other Commissioners, Chairman, if you could describe any other outdated requirements in the Atomic Energy Act that are beyond the NRC's control as a regulator and that would fall to Congress to fix.

Mr. Nieh. I would echo one comment that my fellow Commissioner, Commissioner Weaver,

mentioned related to construction at risk for fuel cycle facilities. I think that is something that needs to be revisited.

Mrs. Houchin. And as we are talking about spent nuclear fuel and nuclear fuel recycling, there are critical minerals that can be extracted in the process with new technology.

What role could States play in expediting the use case in the United States for recycling the spent nuclear fuel?

Mr. Nieh. Well, I think it is -- you know, the Department of Energy recently made available a program, this Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus. So I think those are opportunities for States to, you know, see what role they may have in the entirety of the fuel cycle.

Mrs. Houchin. Thank you.

Well, before I yield back, I just want to thank the chairman, my colleagues, and the NRC for the conversation today. Expanding nuclear energy promises the advancement of clean, safe, affordable power. I am really thrilled with the work that is being done, and I look forward to continued engagement on these issues.

Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Weber. The gentlelady yields back.

Seeing no other members to ask questions, I would like to thank the Commissioners for being here today.

Members may have additional questions for y'all.

Remember, "y'all" is a Texas word.

And I will remind members that they have 10 business days to submit additional questions for the record. And I ask that our witnesses do their best to submit responses within 10 days upon receipt of the questions.

[The information follows:]

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2196 ******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

Mr. Weber. I ask unanimous consent to insert in the record the documents included on the staff hearing documents list.

Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

******** COMMITTEE INSERT ********

Mr. Weber. Without objection, the subcommittee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:34 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]