

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-3641

Minority (202) 225-2927

June 5, 2026

MEMORANDUM

To: Subcommittee on Energy Members and Staff
From: Committee Majority Staff
Re: Subcommittee on Energy Hearing on June 9, 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

The Subcommittee on Energy will hold a hearing on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 10:15 a.m. (ET) in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is entitled, “Nuclear Permitting Reform: Legislation to Advance Efficient Licensing.” The hearing will review the following legislation:

- H.R. 5549, Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act (Reps. Griffith and Schrier)
- H.R. 3978, Nuclear REFUEL (Recycling Efficient Fuels Utilizing Expedited Licensing) Act (Reps. Latta and Peters)
- H.R. 9084, Department of Energy Nuclear Transparency Act (Rep. Castor)
- H.R. ____, Nuclear Advisory Committee Reform Act
- H.R. ____, American Enrichment Deployment Act
- H.R. ____, NRC Staff Pay Alignment Act

II. WITNESSES

- **Maria Korsnick**, President and CEO, Nuclear Energy Institute;
- **Jeffrey Merrifield**, Chair of the Board of Directors, U.S. Nuclear Industry Council;
- **Jeremy Harrell**, Chief Executive Officer, ClearPath; and
- **Kathryn Huff**, Associate Professor, University of Illinois

III. BACKGROUND

At the genesis of the nuclear industry in the mid-Twentieth Century, Congress focused on managing national laboratory research and development (R&D), the production infrastructure for

nuclear weapons through the Atomic Energy Act of 1946,¹ and the development of nuclear reactors for power production and naval propulsion. In time—and in keeping with President Eisenhower’s 1953 Atoms for Peace proposal—Congress fundamentally revised the Atomic Energy Act to remove barriers to the peaceful, civilian application of nuclear technology. The Atomic Energy Act (AEA) of 1954² established a national policy that “the development, use, and control of atomic energy shall be directed so as to promote world peace, improve the general welfare, increase the standard of living, and strengthen free competition and private enterprise.”³

The Atomic Energy Act also assigned regulation and licensing of nuclear energy to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), which oversaw development of the nuclear industry into the 1970s. In the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974,⁴ Congress abolished the AEC and assigned the regulation and licensing of nuclear energy and nuclear materials to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Remaining functions relating to the development and promotion of new nuclear technologies were assigned to what is now the Department of Energy (DOE).⁵

For the past several congresses, Energy and Commerce Committee Members have developed legislation that led to enactment of statutory reforms to assist nuclear development and deployment. These reforms provide a policy framework to foster a more efficient, predictable licensing process able to meet the demand of growing licensing activity anticipated in the coming years. The reforms also focus on aligning federal licensing work necessary to maintain public trust and assure safety of nuclear technologies with the core goals of the AEA, “to make maximum contribution to the general welfare.”⁶ Further, these statutory reforms provide for a more secure nuclear fuel infrastructure, including for the advanced fuels needed for next generation technologies. Legislative initiatives in the 118th Congress are pertinent to legislation considered in this hearing.⁷

Most significantly, on July 9, 2024, the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy (ADVANCE) Act was signed into law.⁸ (The House version of this legislation was H.R. 6544, the Atomic Energy Advancement Act.⁹) The ADVANCE Act establishes requirements for the NRC to license and regulate nuclear technology in an efficient, predictable, and timely manner while maintaining public safety. Additionally, it requires the NRC to align its mission statement with the foundational goals of the AEA and directs it to conduct efficient and predictable licensing processes while regularly updating metrics to measure timely licensing performance and efficiency. The law also updates NRC hiring authorities, reduces fees collected from applicants for advanced nuclear reactors licenses, directs NRC to identify measures to facilitate licensing of reactors at brownfield sites, and directs the NRC to implement measures to increase efficiency of environmental reviews, among other measures.

¹ Pub. L. 79-585.

² Pub. L. 83-703.

³ 42 U.S.C. § 2011.

⁴ Pub. L. 93-438.

⁵ Department of Energy maintained regulatory authority over certain DOE nuclear energy projects, as well as over safety and security of facilities within the nuclear weapons complex.

⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 2011.

⁷ See P.L. 115-439, P.L. 116-260, P.L. 117-58, and P.L. 117-169 for other recently enacted nuclear provisions.

⁸ Pub. L. 118-67.

⁹ H. Rept. 118-391.

On May 13, 2024, the Prohibiting Russian Uranium Imports Act was signed into law.¹⁰ While the U.S. maintains the largest market globally for nuclear fuels, domestic fuel infrastructure has atrophied in recent years, to the point that Russia has been supplying up to a quarter of nuclear fuel used in the U.S. reactor fleet. The Prohibiting Russian Uranium Imports Act provides a date certain, after which no Russian-sourced enriched nuclear fuel will be available for U.S. nuclear reactors. This will create the market conditions for the long-term commercial contracts that domestic fuel producers need to invest in new U.S. supply capacity, including uranium conversion and enrichment capacity. The Nuclear Fuel Security Act of 2023 was signed into law on December 22, 2023, to provide funding and other support to assist the domestic development of advanced and conventional nuclear fuel supplies.¹¹

Against this backdrop, the legislation under consideration makes additional reforms to Atomic Energy Act licensing requirements to ensure efficient, predictable, and timely licensing decisions in keeping with the goals of both the ADVANCE Act and policies to expand domestic fuel capacity. Public reporting on DOE authorizations for reactors and facilities will also be considered.

IV. LEGISLATION

A. H.R. 5549, Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act

This legislation would amend the AEA to remove the need for the NRC to expend resources on unnecessary hearings. It would eliminate the requirement to hold uncontested hearings on applications to the NRC for granting a construction permit, an operating license, or a combined construction and operating license for nuclear facilities. The legislation would also clarify that the NRC may use informal adjudicatory procedures for any hearing the Commission determines appropriate. These provisions would in no way affect the right of persons whose interests are affected to request a hearing on specific matters. (Reps. Griffith and Schrier introduced this legislation on September 23, 2025.)

B. H.R. 3978, Nuclear REFUEL (Recycling Efficient Fuels Utilizing Expedited Licensing) Act

This legislation would amend the definition of a production facility in the AEA to exclude facilities that reprocess spent nuclear fuel in a manner that does not separate plutonium from other transuranic elements. In effect, amending the definition would clarify that certain reprocessing facilities may be licensed under the same regulatory process as other fuel cycle facilities rather than as a production facility. Licensing a fuel cycle facility involves a single process for a license to operate a facility instead of a two-step licensing process for a production facility, which must receive a construction permit and then complete a process for an operating license. (Reps. Latta and Peters introduced this legislation on June 12, 2025.)

¹⁰ Pub. L. 118-62.

¹¹ Pub. L. 118-31.

C. H.R. 9084, Department of Energy Nuclear Transparency Act

This legislation would require DOE to announce and post information on decisions relating to the licensing and authorization of DOE nuclear facilities, as well as changes in directives and safety standards relating to such facilities on a publicly accessible website, within 24 hours of such decisions or actions. The legislation would also require the Secretary of Energy to provide a report annually to the Energy and Commerce Committee and to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that details all such activity by DOE to authorize nuclear facilities over the previous year. (Rep. Castor introduced this legislation on June 2, 2026.)

D. H.R. ____, Nuclear Advisory Committee Reform Act

This legislation would amend the AEA to update the role of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS). The legislation would establish that the ACRS would provide advice to the NRC on license applications, license amendments, regulatory activities, and any other matter only upon specific request by the Commission. The legislation would direct the ACRS to focus on issues that are directly related to reactor design, safety significant, and novel, and that have not previously been acted on by the Committee. The legislation would also update term requirements and require membership that represents a diverse background of technical expertise relevant to the NRC mission.

E. H.R. ____, American Enrichment Deployment Act

This legislation would amend the AEA to update the licensing of uranium enrichment facilities to align with the licensing requirements for all other fuel cycle facilities. It does so by removing enrichment-specific requirements for environmental review and for an adjudicatory hearing and by clarifying that construction of a facility may be allowed prior to licensing under the same terms and conditions applicable to other fuel cycle facilities. The uranium enrichment facility would remain subject to all applicable licensing requirements under sections 53 and 63 of the AEA, as well as NRC's environmental review requirements. A rule of construction provides that the amendment does not affect NRC authority to regulate construction and does not affect the right of any person whose interest may be affected by a licensing proceeding to a hearing under the AEA. The legislation also directs the NRC to revise its regulations to conform with the bill.

F. H.R. ____, NRC Staff Pay Alignment Act

This legislation amends the AEA to provide that the Chairman of the NRC may fix the compensation for career, Senior Executive Service (SES) appointees at a rate that is 10 percent higher than the maximum annual rate of basic pay for SES positions within the Commission. The legislation would help align the pay authority applicable to these career employees with workforce development and pay authority amendments made to the AEA by the ADVANCE Act.

V. STAFF CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Peter Spencer, Calvin Huggins, or Mary Martin of the Majority Committee Staff at (202) 225-3641.