ClearPath Action
300 New Jersey Ave NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20001

October 9, 2026

Questions for the Record
U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Full Committee Hearing, entitled “Nuclear Permitting Reform: Legislation to Advance Efficient Licensing”
June 9, 2026

Questions for the Record to:
Jeremy Harrell
Chief Executive Officer
ClearPath Action, Inc.

Submitted by Rep. Harshbarger (R-TN):

QUESTION:

Can you explain how the Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act would impact the public engagement process for the NRC? Would this legislation reduce public engagement?

ANSWER:

Can you explain how the Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act would impact the public engagement process for the NRC?

The Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act would not reduce public engagement in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) licensing process.[1] The bill only removes the requirement that the NRC must hold an "uncontested, mandatory" hearing, which occurs at the end of the licensing process even when no stakeholder has standing. If a stakeholder is determined to have standing, a hearing would still be held, and in all cases, stakeholders retain the ability to contest a proceeding. Due to the timing and the format of the uncontested, mandatory hearing, the NRC also states that, "the current mandatory hearing format does not provide an opportunity for public participation or feedback."[2]

Would this legislation reduce public engagement?

The current requirement to hold an uncontested, mandatory hearing is based on the lack of public engagement on proposed reactor siting decisions in the early 1960s and doesn't reflect the public engagement opportunities that exist today.[3] In fact, the mandatory hearing has never been the primary method for the public to engage in the NRC's licensing process. The public and other stakeholders have opportunities to engage the NRC, such as through the NRC's public meetings on an application. In particular, the NRC holds roughly 800 public meetings a year, publishes applications, safety evaluations, and environmental review documents online, and asks for public input through public comment periods and outreach.[4]

Other Information

Requiring a mandatory hearing when a license is uncontested has real costs. Idaho National Laboratory found that uncontested, mandatory hearings add around six months to licensing timelines.[5] Even the streamlined, paper-only hearing for Kairos Power's Hermes 2 construction permit delayed the license by about three months.[6] These hearings add significant delays and thousands of hours of staff time for both the applicant and the NRC. Additional staff time is billed to the applicant and increases the total cost of the project.

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[1] https://clearpathaction.org/efficient-nuclear-licensing-hearings-act-s-1757/.

[2] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/06/08/2026-11451/policy-statement-on-mandatory-hearings-for-reactor-licensing.

[3] https://clearpathaction.org/efficient-nuclear-licensing-hearings-act-s-1757/.

[4] https://www.nrc.gov/regulations-legislation/nureg-series-publications/brochures-prepared-by-nrc-staff/br0297.

[5] https://inldigitallibrary.inl.gov/content/uploads/50/2026/04/Sort_65730.pdf.

[6] https://www.nrc.gov/facilities-safety/non-power-facilities/new-facility-licensing/hermes-2-kairos-application.