Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
"Transporting Nuclear Materials: Design, Logistics, and Shipment"
October 1, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Transportation is a critical component of our national responsibility to safely handle and dispose of spent nuclear fuel and high-level nuclear waste from our nuclear national defense programs.

Spent nuclear fuel is stored at 75 sites around the country including on the shoreline of Lake Michigan at both the Cook and Palisades plants. Sixteen of the 80 sites no longer generate electricity and await repurposing for community use or commercial development. Unfortunately, these sites cannot be put to use until the spent fuel has been shipped away.

The experts testifying today bring important perspectives. Among them are the states, which have primary authority for highway safety and community protection; the railroad industry, which develops technical standards for transporting nuclear materials, and understands system capacity limitations; and a former federal official who has literally lived the history of planning for transportation of spent fuel and high-level defense waste.

Whether we authorize temporary away-from-reactor storage, focus on finishing out the permanent repository, or pursue both simultaneously, we must address the underlying transportation issues. There are many issues and questions to take into consideration and we must work to understand them in order to build an efficient and effective transportation system. How quickly can the federal government start shipping spent fuel? What are the repackaging issues? Is the railroad designed to ship spent nuclear fuel and high-level nuclear waste? What are the state and local stakeholders' primary concerns? Are the obstacles technical, institutional, or political? I hope today's hearing will answer some of these questions.

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