

Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden, Chairman House Energy and Commerce Committee

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing “Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2278, the Responsible Disposal Reauthorization Act of 2017, and H.R. 2389, to reauthorize the West Valley demonstration project.”

May 18, 2018

Good morning and welcome to our subcommittee hearing where we will discuss legislation to reauthorize certain Department of Energy (DOE) environmental cleanup projects.

This Congress, the Energy & Commerce Committee, under the stewardship of Vice Chairman Barton and Energy Subcommittee Chairman Upton, has looked at several DOE programs with lapsed authorizations. Today, we will examine two of those projects within the jurisdiction of the Environment Subcommittee.

DOE’s cleanup and disposal projects are not limited to high-level radioactive waste. The Department manages and monitors other environmental remediation projects such as sites authorized under the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP), the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

My Oregon district includes the Department’s Lakeview Processing and Disposal Sites, which are overseen by DOE’s Office of Legacy Management. At this location, a uranium mill processed ore fifty years ago, leaving behind mill tailings to be sent to a nearby disposal cell for safekeeping. When Congress passed the Uranium Mill Tailings Remediation Control Act of 1978, this site in my district was included as one of the 22 inactive ore processing sites to be remediated by DOE.

The bill sponsored by Representative Tipton extends the authorization of a similar disposal cell in his district and I am glad to support this effort.

Additionally, I welcome Representative Tom Reed to speak about the bill to reauthorize an important remediation project in his western New York district at the West Valley site. West Valley was the location of the nation’s only commercial experience with reprocessing spent nuclear fuel. Cleanup at the site continues today, over forty years after the site’s operations were terminated.

The Department of Energy and New York State witnesses this morning will provide additional context about DOE's ongoing activities at the site and remaining challenges, such as finalizing a disposal pathway for the project's high-level radioactive waste.

Last week – with a strong bipartisan vote in support – the House of Representatives helped pave the pathway for the restart of the nation's nuclear waste disposal program with the passage of HR 3053. This should help address some of these long-term challenges. Yet, there are further issues to resolve to deal with our nation's legacy waste.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance these straightforward bills. Thank you and I yield back.