



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairman Jamaal Bowman (D-NY)
of the Subcommittee on Energy

Energy Subcommittee Hearing:
*Nuclear Waste Cleanup: Research and Development Opportunities for
the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management*

July 13, 2022

Good morning, and thank you to our panel of expert witnesses for joining us today to discuss nuclear waste cleanup managed by the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management. The focus of the discussion today will be on how targeted research and development on innovative technologies can be leveraged to perform cleanup faster and at a lower cost.

Some of the nuclear waste we're talking about today was generated almost sixty years ago when the global nuclear arms race during the Cold War spun out of the Manhattan Project. The majority of the legacy nuclear waste that the Department is responsible for is from government-sponsored weapons development and production. However, the Manhattan Project was also the genesis for peaceful uses of nuclear technology, such as nuclear energy. Some of the legacy nuclear waste is also from government-sponsored research and development to further these peaceful purposes. Regardless of the defense or non-defense application, the government has an obligation to the American people to responsibly manage and dispose of this legacy waste.

So, why are we talking about this on the Science Committee, when our legislative jurisdiction is over civilian research and development? This is because the Science Committee is all about finding and applying scientific solutions. Though the budget for the non-defense portion of the Office of Environmental Management is only a little over 4% of the budget for the entire office, much of the science we can use to improve the cleanup process is the same. And when we're learning from experts in this field - many of which are here today - that the lifecycle cost estimates for the remaining cleanup activities are growing to the order of half a trillion dollars or more, it would be irresponsible of us to not look to the science. Unfortunately, the budget dedicated to research and development has shrunk from 5% of the budget a few decades ago to only 1/3 of a percent in recent years.

The good news is we have a good idea of the work that needs to be done. The experts before us have all closely reviewed DOE's Office of Environmental Management. The analyses have been complete, the reports published. They all have the same conclusions and recommendations. We

must look at opportunities for improvement across the cleanup enterprise holistically, and we must increase our investment in research and development of innovative technologies that can be widely used to enable more efficient cleanup. I look forward to hearing our witnesses today go into detail on proposals to do just this.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge the impressive work that the Office of Environmental Management has done to date. Thankfully, the Department has successfully completed a lot of their work here, as only 15 sites out of 107 remain. I was especially pleased to see the work at the Brookhaven National Lab in my home state of New York finish up successfully just this year. This is a tough job. I want to recognize that, and thank those of you who work to make it better.

With that said, thank you all again for being here today, and I look forward to this discussion.