



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

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Energy Subcommittee Hearing:

*“Powering the Nuclear Renaissance:
Accelerating U.S. Leadership in Advanced Nuclear Reactors”*

September 2, 2026

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Weber and Ranking Member Ross, for holding this important hearing. And thank you to each of the witnesses for being here today.

This Committee has long supported the development of advanced nuclear technologies in a bipartisan way. In fact, under former Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson’s leadership, we passed the first comprehensive authorization of our nation’s nuclear energy R&D enterprise in 15 years as part of the Energy Act of 2020, and then we provided billions in forward funding for these authorized activities in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act over the following two years.

Speaking for my Caucus at least, this is because we recognize the vital role that nuclear energy currently plays – along with our substantial renewable and energy storage assets – in providing clean, reliable power to our nation. And we are encouraged by the potential for advanced nuclear technologies, including fusion I might add, to do so much more.

This is why I am also so concerned about several actions taken by this Administration, as well as Republican leadership of other Committees, that would undermine our country’s ability to develop and rely on these technologies in the years to come. President Trump’s legally dubious and completely unjustified firing of the Senate-confirmed Commissioner and former Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Chris Hanson, can never be viewed as an acceptable precedent. By all accounts on both sides of the aisle, Mr. Hanson was doing an excellent job balancing the NRC’s longstanding, critical mission to ensure the safety of our domestic nuclear fleet with thoughtful reforms to accelerate and reduce the costs of NRC’s processes. But clearly none of that mattered to this President.

The Administration has also fired and actively encouraged the loss of hundreds of key expert staff across various agencies that would be necessary to actually carry out the goals for nuclear energy that they say they are trying to achieve, including at the NRC and the Department of Energy's Nuclear Energy, Clean Energy Demonstrations, and Loan Programs Offices.

President Trump has signed several Executive Orders with the clear goal of undermining the independence and the authority of the NRC, attempting to establish an alternative reactor licensing process at the Department of Energy with far less transparency or opportunity for public engagement than the NRC's well-established practices. Here I will note that the complaints of a small number of startup companies with ties to the Administration do not justify gutting an agency that has been a gold standard for the world in ensuring nuclear safety.

The broader nuclear energy community recognizes that one disaster resulting from these actions would severely harm the entire industry – a short-sighted “move fast and break things” approach could frankly be catastrophic.

Lastly, it must be noted that the Department has proposed major cuts to its nuclear energy RD&D activities in each of its budget requests so far, including a proposal to cut its flagship Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program by 51% in FY 2026, and a proposed funding cut for the Office of Nuclear Energy overall by 9% in FY 2027. The so-called “Big Beautiful Bill” that this Congress's Republican leadership passed last year also included a massive cut to support for DOE's Loan Programs Office, substantially reducing its ability to support new nuclear projects that Secretary Wright has insisted are at the top of its agenda. And no, renaming the Loan Programs Office as the “Office of Energy Dominance Financing” does not make this move any less stupid.

I believe there remains plenty of common ground for us all to work together to support and improve our nation's nuclear energy capabilities. But we can do better than what we've seen in the last 19 months of this Administration. If America is going to lead the world in 21st century nuclear technologies, we must do better.

With that I yield back.