

**Opening Statement of the Honorable John Shimkus  
Chairman of the Subcommittee on Environment  
“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**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Thank you for joining us at this morning’s hearing to review legislation to reauthorize two projects within the Department of Energy’s (DOE) portfolio of environmental remediation activities.

I am pleased to report that last week the House overwhelmingly passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2018. This long-overdue legislation provides a disposal path for commercial spent nuclear fuel and our nation’s defense high-level radioactive waste. This defense waste material requires the most careful handling and the most stringent isolation requirements in the Federal government’s inventory; however, extensive decontamination work remains to be accomplished across the country at DOE sites.

DOE’s Office of Environmental Management faces a significant workload to complete decontamination work at legacy Cold War sites. Since its establishment about 30 years ago, EM has successfully remediated 92 sites, but the most technologically challenging projects remain in process at 17 locations.

This morning Mr. Mark Gilbertson will represent the Department on the issues addressed in the legislative proposals. Since this Committee last discussed the critical programs under the Office of Environmental Management, the Department has welcomed a new Assistant Secretary, Anne White. We look forward to working with Assistant Secretary White on the rest of EM’s portfolio.

Our hearing today will discuss one of the Department’s unique projects. During the early years of our nation’s civilian nuclear industry, New York State leased land to a private entity to demonstrate the feasibility of reprocessing spent nuclear fuel. The legacy cleanup at the site, known as the West Valley Demonstration Project, is jointly overseen by DOE and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, on behalf of New York State.

Prior to his election to Congress, the Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, Mr. Tonko, was the President and CEO of NYSERDA. I look forward to the unique

perspective and interest he brings to this morning's hearing based on his previous experience.

In 1980, Congress passed the West Valley Demonstration Project Act to direct DOE to partner with New York to address legacy environmental issues and authorized five million dollars to spend on this project for Fiscal Year 1981. The project has not been reauthorized since and Congressman Reed's bill provides Congress a chance to review the project. The lingering question of how to dispose of the high-level radioactive waste, which was generated prior to passage of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, is an important one that needs further examination.

I welcome my colleague here this morning and thank Mr. Reed for his leadership on behalf of his constituents to bring attention to ongoing issues at the West Valley site.

DOE will provide context regarding key upcoming milestones and remaining challenges at the West Valley site, while NYSERDA will give a voice to the New York State government. These respective viewpoints provide this Subcommittee important information as Congress considers the next steps at the site.

We will also receive testimony on a bipartisan bill sponsored by Congressman Tipton to extend the authorization of the Grand Junction, Colorado disposal cell. Mining and processing uranium generate a byproduct known as uranium mill tailings. Congress passed the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act forty years ago to establish the framework for DOE to dispose of mill tailings. The bill also authorized the Grand Junction, Colorado site to serve as a disposal location.

H.R. 2278, the Responsible Disposal Reauthorization Act, extends the site's authorization for another 25 years. The pro-active reauthorization exemplifies the foresight needed for these disposal sites to plan accordingly.

I am pleased to hold this hearing today and look forward to the testimony.