



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

For Immediate Release
September 27, 2018

Media Contacts: Heather Vaughan, Bridget Dunn
(202) 225-6371

Statement by Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Advancing Nuclear Energy: Powering the Future

Chairman Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to our witnesses for being here today.

Our hearing this morning serves two purposes. First, we will hear about the implementation of Science Committee legislation, S. 97, the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act, which just two weeks ago unanimously cleared the House for the President's signature.

Second, we will hear about what work remains to be done now that we have enacted this groundbreaking nuclear legislation.

Nuclear fission has been a proven source of safe and emission-free energy for over half a century.

As this Committee has repeatedly heard, advanced nuclear energy technology is the best opportunity to make reliable, safe, and emission-free power available throughout the modern and developing world.

This new nuclear power technology represents one of the most promising areas for growth and innovation, increasing economic prosperity and lowering the cost of electricity over time.

Because of technical challenges and the high regulatory costs associated with licensing commercial reactors, the DOE national laboratory system plays an important role in supporting nuclear innovation.

National labs can host critical research infrastructure, while DOE researchers can investigate the fundamental scientific questions that are key to the development of next-generation nuclear fuels and reactor designs.

This approach maximizes the impact of federal research dollars and facilitates the development of a wide variety of nuclear technologies.

The Science Committee's legislation, S.97, prioritizes infrastructure and early stage nuclear R&D. The bill leverages DOE's state-of-the-art supercomputers to accelerate the development of advanced reactors.

It also creates a reliable mechanism for the private sector to partner with DOE labs. This allows industry to build prototype reactors at DOE sites and creates another pathway for American nuclear entrepreneurs to move innovative reactor technology to market.

Most importantly, the bill authorizes construction of a research reactor—or Versatile Neutron Source—at a DOE site.

The safe development of advanced nuclear technology at DOE sites will provide access to DOE resources and expertise and fast-track the regulatory process.

After four years of bipartisan collaboration, I'd like to thank my colleagues, the Energy Subcommittee Chairman, Randy Weber, and Science Committee Ranking Member, Eddie Bernice Johnson, for their initiative on this subject.

It is critical that we develop the next generation of nuclear reactors here at home. Our witnesses today can provide guidance on the next steps Congress should take to ensure American innovators have the tools they need to develop this groundbreaking technology.

I look forward to hearing about the ways in which DOE and the national labs plan to implement this legislation, and how we can continue to build on the history of American leadership in nuclear power.

###