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ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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April 17, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Energy
FROM: Committee Majority Staff
RE: Hearing titled "Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Oversight of Activities, Priorities, and Fiscal Year 2027 Budget"

I. INTRODUCTION

The Subcommittee on Energy will hold a hearing on Thursday, April 22, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. (ET) in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is entitled, "Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Oversight of Activities, Priorities, and Fiscal Year 2027 Budget." The hearing will examine the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Budget and its licensing and regulatory activities.

II. WITNESSES

- **The Honorable Ho K. Nieh**, Chairman;
- **The Honorable David A. Wright,** Commissioner;
- **The Honorable Bradley R. Crowell,** Commissioner;
- **The Honorable Mathew J. Marzano,** Commissioner; and
- **The Honorable Douglas W. Weaver,** Commissioner.

III. BACKGROUND

Nuclear energy plays a critical role in American energy security, reliable generation of power, and American international leadership. In 1946, Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act of 1946[1] to establish the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). The AEC was first responsible for nuclear regulation and licensing. Congress later fundamentally revised the Atomic Energy Act to remove barriers to the peaceful, civilian application of nuclear technology. The Atomic Energy

[1] Pub. L. No. 79-585.

Act of 1954[2] established the policy that "the development, use, and control of atomic energy shall be directed so as to promote world peace, improve the general welfare, increase the standard of living, and strengthen free competition and private enterprise."[3]

The AEC oversaw the development of the nuclear industry into the 1970s. In response to concerns that the AEC regulated the same industry it helped create, Congress passed the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974.[4] Under this legislation, the AEC was abolished, and the NRC was assigned the regulation and licensing of nuclear energy and nuclear materials to ensure the safe use of radioactive materials for beneficial civilian use while protecting the public and the environment.[5]

The NRC operates as a federal safety regulator and oversees the commercial nuclear industry pursuant to the Atomic Energy Act, as amended. In keeping with the established policy, the NRC, per its mission statement:

> [P]rotects public health and safety and advances the nation's common defense and security by enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials through efficient and reliable licensing, oversight, and regulation for the benefit of society and the environment.[6]

The NRC's regulatory mission covers three main areas: Reactors, Materials, and Waste. The NRC regulates commercial nuclear power plants; research, test, and training reactors; nuclear fuel cycle facilities; and nuclear materials used in medicine, academia, and industry. The Commission is also responsible for regulating the transport, storage, and disposal of nuclear materials and waste, along with facility decommissioning and the import and export of radioactive materials.

The NRC is headed by a five-member Commission. The five Commissioners are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate for five-year terms. The President designates one of the Commissioners to be the Chairman and official spokesperson of the Commission. The NRC is presently operating with all five Commissioners, including the current Chairman, Ho Nieh, who was designated as Chairman by President Trump on January 8, 2026.[7] The Chairman's statutory role as the official spokesperson for the Commission also includes the responsibility of carrying out the administrative functions of the Commission. The Chairman's role is also governed by the general policies of the Commission and by such regulatory decisions, findings, and determinations as the Commission may be authorized to make by law.

Today, the United States maintains the world's largest nuclear power industry. With 94 operating reactors (down from 112 in 1990), the U.S. domestic industry produces 97 gigawatts of

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[2] Pub. L. No. 83-703.
[3] 42 U.S.C. § 2011.
[5] U.S. NUCLEAR REG. COMM'N. (NRC), *About NRC*, (Nov. 25, 2025), https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc.html.
[5] U.S. NUCLEAR REG. COMM'N. (NRC), *About NRC*, (Nov. 25, 2025), https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc.html.
[6] *Id.*
[7] U.S. NRC., *Chairman Ho K. Nieh*, (Mar. 11, 2026), https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/organization/commission/nieh.

electricity, accounting for 19 percent of U.S. electrical output. [8] The current fleet of reactors is operated by 21 different power companies at some 54 sites, across 28 states.[9] This energy output also represents about 43 percent of the nation's carbon dioxide-free power generation, accounting for most of the clean power production in some of these states.[10] Two closed reactors are under NRC review to restart, another has announced intention to restart, and there are over 25 new reactor applicants, including advanced reactor applicants, currently engaging with the agency.[11]

In 2019, Congress passed and President Trump signed into law the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act (NEIMA).[12] This law reformed the NRC's fee structure and required regulatory reforms to help enable efficient licensing of advanced nuclear reactor technologies. Those regulatory reforms were finalized on March 30, 2026, creating a new, risk-informed, technology inclusive regulatory framework for advanced reactors.[13]

In July 2024, the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act (ADVANCE Act) was signed into law.[14] (The House version of this legislation was H.R. 6544, the Atomic Energy Advancement Act.[15]) The ADVANCE Act establishes requirements for the NRC to license and regulate nuclear technology in an efficient, predictable, and timely manner while maintaining proper public safety. Additionally, it requires the NRC to align its mission with the foundational goals of the AEA and directs it to conduct efficient and predictable licensing processes while regularly updating metrics to measure timely licensing performance and efficiency. The law updates NRC hiring authorities, reduces fees collected from applicants for advanced nuclear reactors licenses, directs NRC to identify measures to facilitate licensing of reactors at brownfield sites, and directs the NRC to implement measures to increase efficiency of environmental reviews. Internationally, the law improves global nuclear cooperation through enhanced DOE and NRC technical support for U.S. allies, reduced barriers to investment in U.S. projects, and required updates by DOE to its nuclear export review policy.

In addition to laws enacted by Congress, the Trump Administration issued four Executive Orders (EO) on May 23, 2025, to provide for further development and deployment of U.S. nuclear technology, as well as U.S. engagement in nuclear commerce with other nations: Deploying Advanced Nuclear Reactor Technologies for National Security;[16] Ordering Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission;[17] Reforming Nuclear Reactor Testing at the Department of

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[8] U.S. ENERGY INFORMATION ADMIN. (EIA), *The United States operates the world's largest nuclear power plant fleet* (Apr. 24, 2025), https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=65104.
[9] U.S. NRC., *2024-2025 Information Digest* (Feb. 2025), https://www nrc.gov/docs/ML2505/ML25051A094.pdf
[10] NUCLEAR ENERGY INSTITUTE, Nuclear Energy Fast Facts, NEI (Apr. 2025), https://www.nei.org/getContentAsset/0325fd3d-356b-47d9-91ec-ded1dcc27cc1/8d8ff8d6-b2ae-401b-a63c-f6b108e809d2/Nuclear-Energy-Fast-Facts-2025.pdf?language=en-US&disposition=inline.
[11] U.S. NRC Congressional Budget Justification Fiscal Year 2027.
[12] Pub. L. No. 115-439.
[13] 91 Fed. Reg. 15696 (Mar. 30, 2026).
[14] Pub. L. No. 118-67.
[15] H. Rept. No. 118-391.
[16] Exec. Order No. 14299, 90 Fed. Reg. 22581 (May 29, 2025).
[17] Exec. Order No. 14300, 90 Fed. Reg. 22587 (May 29, 2025).

Energy;[18] and Reinvigorating the Nuclear Industrial Base.[19] The EOs establish policies that are consistent with many of the policies recently enacted by Congress.

The NRC's fiscal year 2027 budget request, including for the Office of Inspector General, is $892.3 million to support 2,606 full-time employees. This request is a decrease of $79 million or approximately 8 percent compared to the FY 2026 enacted budget.[20] Of the $892.3 million in budget authority, NRC expects to recover $756.2 million in fees assessed to applicants and licensees, resulting in a net appropriation request of $136 million, a decrease of $16.5 million from the 2026 enacted budget.[21]

The NRC major program budget requests are organized under four activities: $460.7 million for Nuclear Reactor Safety, including licensing, regulating, and overseeing civilian nuclear power, research and test reactors, and medical isotope facilities; $132.4 million for Nuclear Materials and Waste Safety, including spent fuel storage and transportation, nuclear materials users, decommissioning and low-level waste, high-level waste, and fuel facilities; $285 million for Corporate support, including IT, policy support, human resource management, administrative services; and $0 funding requested for University Nuclear Leadership Program, which includes grants for nuclear engineering education.

More information on the funding requests for FY 2027 for select programs can be found in the attached appendix.

IV. ISSUES

- NRC's mission of enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies.
- Implementation of the ADVANCE Act and other Congressional priorities.
- Implementation of nuclear related Executive Orders.
- NRC activities with respect to reactor oversight and licensing.
- NRC budget, performance, and workforce issues.

V. STAFF CONTACTS

For any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Mary Martin, Peter Spencer, Andrew Furman or Calvin Huggins of the Committee Staff at (202) 225-3641.

[18] Exec. Order No. 14301, 90 Fed. Reg. 22591 (May 29, 2025).
[19] Exec. Order No. 14302, 90 Fed. Reg. 22595 (May 29, 2025).
[20] U.S. NRC Congressional Budget Justification Fiscal Year 2027.
[21] *Id.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Budget Authority and Full-Time Equivalents (Dollars in Thousands)

Business Line/Major Program	FY 2025 Enacted		FY 2025 Actuals		FY 2026 Enacted		FY 2027 Request		Changes from FY 2026 Enacted	
	$K	FTE	$K	FTE	$K	FTE	$K	FTE	$K	FTE
Operating Reactors	400,911	1,498	423,186	1,453	411,568	1,380	373,478	1,276	(38,090)	(104)
New Reactors	83,950	294	83,020	282	90,701	317	87,178	306	(3,523)	(11)
Nuclear Reactor Safety Total	**$484,861**	**1,792**	**$506,206**	**1,735**	**$502,269**	**1,698**	**$460,656**	**1,582**	**($41,613)**	**(116)**
Spent Fuel Storage and Transportation	28,202	97	28,196	98	26,285	90	24,888	85	(1,397)	(5)
Nuclear Materials Users	65,275	205	66,791	202	64,239	200	61,256	176	(2,982)	(23)
Decommissioning and Low-Level Waste	24,688	92	22,315	83	27,933	94	24,766	87	(3,167)	(7)
High-Level Waste	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fuel Facilities	23,737	84	24,800	86	22,950	79	21,514	71	(1,436)	(8)
Nuclear Materials and Waste Safety Total	**$141,903**	**477**	**$142,107**	**470**	**$141,406**	**463**	**$132,424**	**419**	**($8,982)**	**(43)**
Corporate Support	301,554	588	313,590	554	309,025	574	285,024	542	(24,001)	(32)
University Nuclear Leadership Program	0	0	7,003	0	12,400	0	0	0	(12,400)	0
Subtotal	**$928,318**	**2,858**	**$968,906**	**2,759**	**$965,100**	**2,734**	**$878,104**	**2,543**	**($86,996)**	**(191)**
Office of the Inspector General	15,769	63	14,364	50	18,795	68	14,245	63	(4,550)	(5)
Total	**$944,087**	**2,921**	**$983,270**	**2,809**	**$983,895**	**2,802**	**$892,349**	**2,606**	**($91,546)**	**(196)**
Carryover	0	0	0	0	(12,400)	0	0	0	12,400	0
Agency Total	**$944,087**	**2,921**	**$983,270**	**2,809**	**$971,495**	**2,802**	**$892,349**	**2,606**	**($79,146)**	**(196)**

Notes:
- $K includes salaries and benefits as well as contract support and travel. Numbers may not add due to rounding.