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U.S. House Committee on Energy & Commerce
Energy Subcommittee
Nuclear Permitting Reform: Legislation to Advance Efficient Licensing

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Good morning, Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Castor and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for holding this important hearing.

My name is Jeremy Harrell. I am the Chief Executive Officer of ClearPath Action, a 501(c)(4) organization that advocates for more clean energy innovation, modernized permitting and regulatory reform, America's global competitiveness for manufacturing and unlocking more American resources. To further that mission, we develop cutting-edge policy solutions on clean energy and clean manufacturing innovation. ClearPath Action collaborates with public and private sector stakeholders to enable private-sector deployment of critical technologies needed to meet the globe's energy and environmental needs.

New nuclear is no longer a future promise. It is happening now. Entrepreneurs are moving advanced nuclear technologies from concept to construction and attracting private investment. At the same time, demand for electricity is rising at an unprecedented pace, driven by AI, data centers, advanced manufacturing and economic growth. Americans want power sources that are reliable, affordable and clean. Nuclear is uniquely positioned to provide all three.

Meeting that demand is not just an economic imperative; it is a strategic one. The nations that build and export the next generation of nuclear technology will shape global energy markets, supply chains and geopolitical influence for decades to come. China and Russia are working aggressively to dominate those markets. Every reactor we build, every license we issue and every domestic fuel facility we bring online strengthens America's hand in that competition.

This is a pivotal moment. The decisions made in this Congress will determine whether America leads the next era of nuclear energy or watches from the sidelines.

Today, my testimony will cover four related priorities:

1. The importance of a predictable, efficient regulator that enables innovation and deployment;
2. The growing portfolio of nuclear projects advancing toward deployment across the United States;
3. The ways the targeted legislation before this Committee can support continued industry growth; and
4. The role a strong domestic nuclear industry plays in enhancing U.S. competitiveness on the global stage.

Context and Momentum

In 2018, the outlook for nuclear energy looked uncertain. At that time, several reactors had closed or announced plans to close due to economic pressures from low natural gas prices and electricity market structures that often failed to value nuclear energy's reliability and carbon-free attributes.[1] These challenges raised serious concerns about the long-term viability of the nation's nuclear fleet.

Today, that uncertainty has been replaced by a clear commitment to the future of nuclear energy. By 2020, 25% of reactors were moving toward 80-year operating lifetimes.[2] The most recent industry survey shows almost 100% of reactors intend to operate for 80 years,[3] and three of those prematurely retired reactors are actively seeking to restart operations.[4] Today, those same companies expect to add 23 GW in new nuclear generation over the next 15 years.[5] This dramatic shift reflects growing recognition that nuclear energy is indispensable for delivering reliable, affordable and clean electricity for generations to come.

Bipartisan Reforms Are Delivering Results

Today's nuclear momentum is rooted in the foundation this Committee helped establish through years of bipartisan work to modernize regulation, reduce barriers and position the United States for a new era of nuclear energy.

Bipartisan legislation, such as the *Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act* (NEIMA)[6] in 2019 and the *Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act* (ADVANCE Act)[7] in 2024, began the important work of modernizing the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Bolstered by Trump's Executive Order, "Ordering the Reform of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission," the NRC now has dozens of rulemakings underway that touch nearly every aspect of the licensing process.[8,9]

What began as Committee-led reform has evolved into nearly a decade of aligned action across Congress, the White House, the Department of Energy (DOE), the Department of War (DOW) and the NRC. That momentum is producing real results, but targeted reforms can further bolster a more efficient, nimble and diligent American regulatory structure.

Regulatory Certainty Drives Deployment

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[1] Announced nuclear plant shutdowns threatened roughly 10.5 gigawatts of nuclear energy and 7,500 direct, high-quality jobs in the United States. Nuclear Energy Institute. (2018). Premature Nuclear Plant Closures and Announced Shutdowns. In *Nuclear By the Numbers* (page 15).

[2] https://www.nei.org/resources/fact-sheets/nuclear-by-the-numbers

[3] https://www.nei.org/resources/reports-briefs/the-future-of-nuclear-power-2025-survey

[4] ibid.

[5] ibid.

[6] https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/512

[7] https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/870

[8] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/05/29/2025-09798/ordering-the-reform-of-the-nuclear-regulatory-commission

[9] https://clearpath.org/our-take/10-nrc-rulemakings-to-watch/

Removing those barriers starts with ensuring the NRC remains an efficient, effective and predictable regulator. For capital-intensive projects like nuclear energy, regulatory uncertainty translates directly into investment risk. Developers, utilities and investors must make long-term commitments years before a project generates electricity, making clear and predictable licensing pathways essential.

Regulatory modernization is about improving processes to enable deployment. When companies have confidence in licensing timelines and regulatory expectations, they are more willing to invest, innovate and build. A modern regulatory framework helps reduce project risk, attract private capital and accelerate the commercialization of new technologies while maintaining the NRC's strong commitment to safety.

We are already seeing the benefits. As the NRC implements reforms and gains experience through licensing reviews, companies across the nuclear sector are moving forward with new reactor projects, fuel cycle investments, reactor restarts and power uprates. These projects demonstrate that regulatory certainty is not simply an abstract goal; it is a key enabler of investment, innovation and deployment.

By reducing uncertainty and streamlining licensing, NRC modernization is helping unlock new investment and bring new expertise into the nuclear sector.

From Regulatory Reform to Real-World Deployment

The impact of reforms is no longer theoretical. In the last couple of years, a wave of project announcements and early licensing activities has demonstrated growing momentum across the nuclear sector:

- **Domestic enrichment** announcements for new and expanded capacity have been made in Ohio, where Centrus is investing $560 million; Kentucky, where General Matter is investing $1.5 billion; Tennessee, where Orano is investing $5 billion; and New Mexico, where Urenco is making a multi-billion-dollar investment to expand its enrichment capacity by 50%.[10,11,12,13]
- **The Janus Program at the Department of War** aims to commence operation of an Army-regulated nuclear reactor at a domestic military installation no later than September 30, 2028.[14] In April 2025, the cross-functional Defense Innovation Unit's Advanced Nuclear Power for Installations (ANPI) program announced potential partnerships with eight microreactor companies.[15]
- **The DOE Reactor Pilot Program** aims to have three companies achieve criticality by July 4, 2026.[16] The companies in this program will also benefit from the improvements in

[10] https://www.centrusenergy.com/news/centrus-to-expand-oak-ridge-centrifuge-manufacturing-plant-to-facilitate-large-scale-deployment/

[11] https://paducahky.gov/news/general-matter-construct-15-billion-uranium-enrichment-facility-paducah

[12] https://www.orano.group/en/news/news-group/2026/january/orano-obtains-900-million-dollars-of-funding-from-the-us-department-of-energy-to-develop-new-uranium-enrichment-capacity-on-us-soil

[13] https://urencousa.com/news/sustainability/2026/urenco-usa-plans-significant-expansion-of-us-uranium-enrichment-capacity

[14] https://nationalinterest.org/blog/energy-world/americas-nuclear-battlefield-the-janus-programs-strategic-power-play

[15] https://www.ans.org/news/2025-04-14/article-6931/us-advances-microreactor-program-for-military-site%E2%80%A6/

[16] https://www.energy.gov/ne/us-department-energy-reactor-pilot-program

NRC licensing, as the test data and operating experience will support their commercial NRC license applications.

- **The DOME testbed at the Nuclear Reactor Innovation Center (NRIC)** at Idaho National Laboratory went from being seven months behind schedule in May 2025 to finishing a year early in May 2026.[17] Radiant will be the first company to test in DOME and plans to go critical in the summer of 2026 as part of the Reactor Pilot Program.[18] The broader NRIC capabilities and facilities support both the Janus Program and the Reactor Pilot Program.[19]
- **Kairos** is building its Hermes and Hermes 2 reactors in Tennessee.[20] The Kairos Hermes 2 reactor safety review directly demonstrated the NRC's learning curve. According to the NRC, it was completed "nearly four months ahead of schedule, and using about 60% fewer resources than expected."[21]
- **TerraPower**, a participant in the DOE Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program (ARDP), is the first commercial non-light-water reactor to receive a construction permit by the NRC.[22] TerraPower first broke ground on its Wyoming site in June 2024 and began construction on safety-significant elements after receiving its NRC construction permit in March 2026.[23]
- **X-energy**, also a participant in the DOE ARDP, completed its environmental review with the NRC in May 2026 for its site in Texas.[24] The environmental assessment (EA) review was completed in under one year and resulted in a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).[25] This is noteworthy because the NRC typically defaults to performing environmental impact statements (EIS), which are much longer. For example, Kairos Hermes 1 test reactor's recent EIS took two years to complete NRC review.[26]
- **Other projects** are seeking to build domestically and abroad, like GE Vernova Hitachi in Tennessee, Canada, Japan and other countries.[27] The NRC, Canadian and UK regulators have signed a memorandum of understanding for regulatory process collaboration on reactors being licensed in multiple countries, like the GE Vernova Hitachi design.[28] The Department of Commerce has also played an active role in accelerating international deployments. GE Vernova is the recipient of the Department of Commerce's trade partnership with Japan.[29]

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[17] https://nric.inl.gov/content/uploads/34/2026/05/Day-1-Presentations.pdf

[18] https://www.radiantnuclear.com/blog/doe-pdsa-approval/

[19] https://nric.inl.gov/content/uploads/34/2026/05/Day-1-Presentations.pdf

[20] https://www.kairospower.com/locations/tennessee

[21] https://www.powermag.com/kairos-power-gets-nrc-green-light-for-second-molten-salt-nuclear-facility/

[22] https://www.energy.gov/ne/articles/nrc-issues-construction-permit-terrapowers-natrium-advanced-reactor

[23] https://www.terrapower.com/TerraPower-Commences-Construction-on-Americas-First-Utility-Scale-Advanced-Nuclear-Power-Plant

[24] https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2026-05-20/pdf/2026-10073.pdf

[25] https://x-energy.com/news/nrc-issues-environmental-assessment-with-finding-of-no-significant-impact-for-dow-and-x-energys-propsed-advanced-nuclear-project-in-texas/

[26] https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/publications/reforming-nuclear-reactor-permitting-and-environmental-reviews-roundtable-report/

[27] https://www.tva.com/energy/our-power-system/nuclear/clinch-river-small-modular-reactor

[28] https://www.nrc.gov/reactors/new-reactors/advanced/who-were-working-with/international-cooperation/nrc-cnsc-moc/collaboration

[29] https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2026/03/joint-announcement-japan-us-strategic-investment

- **Restarts and uprates** have surged due to increased demand for reliable electricity. Three major restarts are underway – Holtec's Palisades plant in Michigan, NextEra's Duane Arnold plant in Iowa and Constellation's Three Mile Island plant (now the Crane Clean Energy Center) in Pennsylvania.[30,31,32] The Crane Clean Energy Center alone is expected to create 400 direct jobs and 3,000 indirect jobs. These three projects will add 2.25 GWe of reliable 24/7 energy to the grid. Additionally, over the next seven years, the NRC expects to receive applications for 32 power uprates totaling 2.4 GWe of new energy.[33]

This list is not exhaustive, and illustrates a clear pattern: years of bipartisan policy and regulatory reforms are translating into real-world investment and deployment. Because many of these projects are still working through validation, licensing and early deployment, continued policy and regulatory support will be essential to carry this momentum forward.

This Committee has an important opportunity to help ensure today's early movers are followed by a broader wave of deployment. Much of the work ahead is oversight and implementation of the modernization already underway at the NRC. However, legislative barriers remain. Targeted and practical legislative solutions, such as the reforms before the Committee today, should be designed to support technology innovation without compromising safety.

A Strong Domestic Industry Is a Global Competitive Advantage

Nuclear energy is more than an energy resource; it is a strategic asset. China and Russia are using state-backed nuclear exports to expand their global influence, offering reactor technology, financing, fuel and long-term support packages that can tie countries to their supply chains for decades. The United States must offer credible alternatives, and that starts with maintaining a strong domestic nuclear industry.

The opportunity is significant. More than 30 countries are considering new nuclear programs, including many regions where the United States has important economic, diplomatic and security interests.[34] Success in these markets depends on success at home. Countries want to partner with a nation that can build, operate and regulate nuclear energy effectively. Every new reactor, fuel facility and successful licensing action strengthens America's position in the global market.

A competitive U.S. nuclear industry also advances broader national interests. Civil nuclear partnerships promote strong nonproliferation standards, while investments in domestic enrichment, reactors and manufacturing strengthen supply chains, support high-skilled jobs and provide reliable energy options for allies.

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[30] https://holtecinternational.com/products-and-services/holtec-palisades/

[31] https://www.nexteraenergy.com/duane-arnold-energy-center.html

[32] https://www.constellationenergy.com/about/locations/crane-clean-energy-center.html

[33] https://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/licensing/power-uprates/status-power-apps/expected-applications (accessed June 1, 2026)

[34] https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-looks-to-expand-successful-global-nuclear-power-capacity-building-projects

Finally, the NRC's reputation as a rigorous, independent regulator remains one of America's greatest competitive advantages. Regulatory reforms that improve efficiency while maintaining strong safety standards reinforce that reputation and demonstrate that the United States can deploy nuclear technologies at commercial speed without compromising public confidence.

Policy Recommendations

The legislation before the Committee reflects a common principle: modernizing regulatory processes without compromising safety. Each proposal targets a specific barrier to deployment, helping ensure the NRC can efficiently license the technologies, facilities and fuel infrastructure needed to meet growing energy demand.

The Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act, introduced by Representatives Griffith (R-VA-9), Schrier (D-WA-8) and Veasey (D-TX-33), improves the efficiency of the NRC's licensing process for new reactors and enrichment facilities without limiting opportunities for public engagement. The mandatory nature of these hearings was important in the 1960s when public engagement was limited, but today's licensing processes provide significant opportunities for public engagement with meetings and documentation during safety and environmental reviews.[35]

Under the *Atomic Energy Act* (AEA), the NRC is required to hold a hearing on every license application with the NRC Commissioners, NRC staff members and license applicants. This hearing is mandatory, even if the hearing is uncontroversial and uncontested. This bill would remove the requirement for a Commission hearing on a license application if the hearing is uncontested.

These "uncontested mandatory hearings" are estimated to require upwards of 1,500 hours of preparation by NRC staff, have cost the applicant hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars and on average delay application approvals by six months.[36,37] When uncontested, removing this unnecessary hearing reduces the bureaucratic burden on all parties involved, including industry, the NRC staff and the NRC Commissioners. *The Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act* makes one of the most important remaining legislative changes to improve efficiency at the NRC.

The Nuclear Recycling Efficient Fuels Utilizing Expedited Licensing (REFUEL) Act**,** introduced by Chairman Latta (R-OH-5) and Representative Peters (D-CA-50), clarifies that certain types of used nuclear fuel reprocessing be regulated like a fuel facility. New nuclear reprocessing technologies under development do not fall squarely into the NRC's current licensing pathways under 10 CFR Part 70 or 10 CFR Part 50.

These new, more proliferation-resistant methods of nuclear fuel reprocessing are the next step in getting more energy out of our nuclear fuel. Pursuing nascent opportunities in this arena supports both U.S. fuel security and has the potential to reduce taxpayer liabilities on spent fuel.

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[35] https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML2419/ML24197A064.pdf

[36] https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nuclear-regulatory-commission-hearing-nuclear-construction-final-approval_n_65133939e4b03ffb8c701426

[37] https://inl.gov/content/uploads/2024/11/Recommendations-to-Improve-Nuclear-Licensing.pdf

The DOE has been working alongside private industry to innovate reprocessing and recycling technologies. Now, industry must be enabled to build these technologies at scale.

The Department of Energy Nuclear Transparency Act**,** introduced by Ranking Member Castor (D-FL-14), would require DOE to announce within 24 hours, on a publicly accessible website of the DOE, altered nuclear facility directives or safety standards including how they were altered, issued Preliminary Documented Safety Analysis (PDSA) or a Documented Safety Analysis (DSA), and if DOE entered into an agreement to authorize a facility. It would also require the publication of the PDSA and DSA and an annual Congressional Report. Each of these proposals seeks to increase transparency in the DOE authorization process.

The Nuclear Advisory Committee Reform Act discussion draft modernizes the role of the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS) by defining the focus of the Committee and shifting many of the Committee's responsibilities from mandatory to by Commission request.

The ACRS plays an important role within the NRC to advise the Commission on the hazards of proposed or existing nuclear facilities and on the adequacy of proposed reactor safety standards. Currently, the AEA mandates that the ACRS review every licensing proceeding. Functionally, this is a public meeting where both NRC staff and applicants present their work and field questions.

This draft bill refocuses the Committee on issues that are directly related to the reactor design, are safety significant, are novel and have not previously been acted on by the Committee. This aligns with the paradigm of new reactor companies which are designing around standardization and inherent safety features.

Reorienting the ACRS toward relevant new, novel and safety-significant topics will be vital to ensuring that Committee time is spent on reviewing the safety of these new designs rather than sitting through repetitive licensing proceedings. In addition to focusing this unique technical body on what is the most important, these changes will significantly reduce the burden on NRC staff and license applicants.

The American Enrichment Deployment Act discussion draft allows new enrichment companies to start building faster while maintaining the NRC's regulatory authority over whether or not a company can safely operate.

Today, the AEA requires that enrichment companies perform an EIS and that the EIS is completed prior to the hearing on the issuance of a license for the construction and operation of an enrichment facility. Requiring a license prior to construction is not necessary to ensure the facility is constructed properly. The NRC must still certify construction and that its requirements are met prior to that facility receiving nuclear material and commencing operation.

Congress and multiple Administrations have made clear the importance of nuclear fuel security to national security through the creation of the Advanced Nuclear Fuel Availability Program in 116th Congress and the enactment of the *Nuclear Fuel Security Act* and *Prohibiting Russian*

Uranium Imports Act in the 118th Congress.[38,39,40] During this Congress, up to $2.7 billion of task orders have been issued to establish three domestic commercial-scale enrichment facilities.[41]

This legislation builds upon these steps by focusing on building the facility itself. New fuel enrichment supports new reactors and our current nuclear fleet by reducing dependence on Russian imported fuel. Performing licensing and construction activities concurrently could save an enrichment facility applicant 12-18 months.[42] Allowing the companies to construct "at risk" while pursuing their NRC license supports recent Congressional priorities, reduces project costs by reducing time to deployment and gets new fuel enrichment online faster.

The NRC Staff Pay Alignment Act discussion draft would compensate senior NRC management so that the Commission can compete for top talent. The ADVANCE Act provided additional flexibility for the Commission to attract qualified staff. Since then, the market has only become more competitive as companies aim for commercialization. The Committee must ensure that additional reforms allow the agency to attract staff at every level.

Looking Ahead: Maintaining America's Nuclear Advantage

The legislative milestones of the past decade, such as NEIMA and the ADVANCE Act, were achieved through bipartisanship and the promotion of nuclear energy as a national priority. Durable bipartisan policy helps reduce uncertainty and signals that the United States is serious about expanding its nuclear sector, without reducing safety. Furthermore, a strong domestic nuclear industry is necessary to compete globally, especially as other countries, including China and Russia, seek to dominate international nuclear markets.

As the Committee looks ahead, continued bipartisan work on nuclear regulation, fuel supply, reducing early-mover deployment risk, manufacturing capacity and permitting will be essential to maintain today's momentum.

Congress must ensure that:

- The United States remains a global leader in nuclear technology;
- The NRC remains a strong, independent and technically credible regulator;
- Rising electricity demand can be met with reliable, clean and affordable power; and
- Investors and utilities have the durability and predictability necessary to make investments.

NRC modernization is not the only piece of the puzzle, but it is a critical one. The regulator must be ready for the technologies, project delivery models and deployment timelines ahead.

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[38] https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/133/

[39] https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2670/

[40] https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1042/

[41] https://www.energy.gov/articles/us-department-energy-awards-27-billion-restore-american-uranium-enrichment

[42] https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc/generic-schedules#ftn1

Conclusion

The United States has made significant progress toward commercializing new nuclear technologies, building fuel supply chains and modernizing our regulatory framework to meet this moment. Soon, that progress will mean new, clean electrons on the grid. Congress now has an opportunity to build on that momentum through targeted reforms that make the NRC more efficient, predictable and prepared.

With continued bipartisan leadership, a modern regulatory framework and a strong domestic nuclear industry, the United States can lead the next era of nuclear energy deployment.

Thank you again, Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Castor and members of this Committee for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to today's discussion.