

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR ARLEN SPECTER BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON CLEAN AIR AND NUCLEAR SAFETY**

Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Voinovich and members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate you having me here today and thank you for holding this important hearing to look into the security apparatus in place to protect our nation's nuclear power infrastructure. I have personally made multiple visits to many of Pennsylvania's nuclear facilities, including a series of trips after September 11th, 2001. I have long advocated for adequate nuclear safety and security, particularly given Pennsylvania's role as the nation's second largest state in nuclear energy production and with the history of the Three Mile Island incident on March 28, 1979.

Projected growth in energy demand necessitates improvements to our nation's energy infrastructure, as well as increased generation capacity. At the same time, the threat of climate change is such that this demand must be met with cleaner, more efficient sources of power. I believe that Congress should enact policies which promote a well-balanced approach to meeting energy demands, and that such an approach must include nuclear power. It appears that the Senate is poised to act on climate change legislation as early as this spring. I applaud this committee for acting on legislation last fall and as a lead cosponsor with Senator Bingaman of S. 1766, the Low Carbon Economy Act, I look forward to working with my colleagues in addressing this issue. Of course, meeting our energy demands and climate change are related, and it is in this respect that I believe

nuclear power can prove particularly beneficial as it possesses the advantages of being both clean and reliable.

However, as with the other options we have for meeting our energy needs, nuclear power is not without its own drawbacks. It was in my state of Pennsylvania that the most serious commercial nuclear accident in United States history occurred. On March 28, 1979 an equipment failure at the Three Mile Island Unit 2 nuclear reactor led to what the Nuclear Regulatory Commission called “a severe core meltdown, the most dangerous kind of nuclear power accident.” Fortunately, the worst case scenario of massive radiation exposure did not occur. Unfortunately, the accident caused an already skeptical and frightened public to grow increasingly concerned with the safety of nuclear power. Although the nuclear industry and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission responded to this accident by implementing wide ranging changes to address the issue of nuclear safety, the event at Three Mile Island essentially capped the growth of nuclear power in the United States with no nuclear plants having been ordered since 1978.

Recently, however, there has been talk of a “nuclear renaissance” as it has become apparent nuclear power could produce baseload power in a carbon-constrained environment. Accordingly, electric utilities and other firms have announced plans to apply for combined construction permits and operating licenses for about 30 new reactors since the beginning of 2007. The potential for a resurgence of the nuclear industry in the United States is a positive development, but also presents a set of challenges that must be overcome if the so-called nuclear renaissance is to occur. First, there is the issue of high

capital costs of building new nuclear plants, but the recently enacted loan guarantee program holds the promise of ushering in a new era of nuclear power expansion in our country. Furthermore, we must address the issue of radioactive waste management which has been languishing with the delay of development of Yucca Mountain. Finally, there is the concern of nuclear power plant safety, security and regulation which is the topic of today's hearing.

A more recent incident, also in my state, occurred last fall which prompted enhanced attention to the safety and security of our nation's nuclear fleet. The news of contracted security guards caught sleeping on duty at the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station in York County, Pennsylvania alarmed many, as the security of these facilities is a matter of great public concern. The nature of these facilities makes them attractive terrorist targets, thus it is imperative they are operated with the highest level of security.

While it was a relief to know that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission determined there was no immediate security threat due to the incident at Peach Bottom, the nature of the incident and the events leading up to it are cause for ongoing concern. That multiple security officers were found to be inattentive on four separate occasions is troubling, but even greater so is the fact that security supervisors were made aware of the situation, yet failed to correct the inattentive behavior. Furthermore, the inattentiveness at Peach Bottom only received attention from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) after the NRC received videotaped evidence of the behavior by the news media. Thankfully,

the NRC promptly responded by conducting what seems to be a thorough and complete investigation.

However, I believe the investigation has brought to light items that must be corrected. First of all, it is my understanding the management at Peach Bottom failed to address poor environmental conditions in the ready room, where guards were found to be sleeping, and that it failed to provide adequate attentiveness stimuli. At a time when vigilance is absolutely necessary, sleeping security guards cannot be tolerated. It is the responsibility of the management to ensure that each plant's security force have proper access to quality facilities and equipment to guarantee their productivity. Furthermore, it is critical there is a mechanism by which complaints and comments by plant employees can be fully and fairly vetted by both management and the regulatory overseers, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Although the Nuclear Regulatory Commission reported that at no point was the security of the plant in jeopardy, events such as that at Peach Bottom seriously undermine public confidence in our ability to safely and securely operate a nuclear power industry in the United States. Previously, I touched on the idea of a new era of nuclear energy in our country. For such a policy to take shape there must be no question that nuclear power plants are both safe and secure.