Table of Contents

U.S. Senate Date: Wednesday, June 25, 2025

Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

STATEMENT OF:	PAGE:
THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA	3
THE HONORABLE SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND	7
USHA-MARIA TURNER, OF OKLAHOMA, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY FOR THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND TRIBAL AFFAIRS	13
DAVID A. WRIGHT, OF SOUTH CAROLINA, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION	18

HEARING ON THE NOMINATIONS OF USHA-MARIA TURNER TO BE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY FOR THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND TRIBAL AFFAIRS AND DAVID A. WRIGHT TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Wednesday, June 25, 2025

United States Senate

Committee on Environment and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:55 a.m. in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Shelley Moore Capito [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Whitehouse, Lummis, Curtis, Sullivan, Ricketts, Wicker, Boozman, Husted, Markey, Kelly, Padilla.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

Senator Capito. There is a lot going on in terms of committee meetings, so I am going to go ahead and begin, because I have to run over to Commerce to vote.

So I am calling the hearing to order, and good morning, and thank you all for being here. I want to thank my former colleague from the House, Congressman Joe Wilson, for being here to welcome his friend, David Wright. Thank you. Good to see you.

Today we will receive testimony from David Wright, who is nominated to serve another five-year term as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and Usha-Maria Turner, the nominee to serve as the Environmental Protection Agency's Assistant Administrator for the Office of International and Tribal Affairs.

Our consideration of Chairman Wright's renomination comes at a crucial time. China is executing a rapid buildout of its nuclear industry and is projected to overtake the United States as the global leader of nuclear electricity generation.

The demand for clean, baseload power is skyrocketing as we position America to win the AI race, and global events continue to highlight the grave importance of energy security.

The importance of those policy concerns has led to the

broad bipartisan agreement that we need more nuclear, and that we need to accomplish that goal safely and quickly. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is integral to achieving that goal.

A half century ago, Congress separated the dual and conflicting responsibilities to both promote and regulate the use of nuclear energy from the Atomic Energy Commission. In doing so, Congress established the Department of Energy's predecessor agency and created the NRC to regulate the civilian use of nuclear technology.

The principle of separate organizations that promote and regulate nuclear power is as important today as it was 50 years ago, and Congress has continued to reinforce the value of an efficient and competent nuclear regulator. That is why, last Congress, I, alongside Senator Whitehouse and a strong bipartisan coalition, led the effort to get the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy, or better known as the ADVANCE Act, signed into law.

As the designated head of the NRC, the Chairman is instrumental in leading the agency's ambitious implementation of the law. The Chairman is responsible for selecting key senior agency leadership with the approval of the Commission.

Through the Executive Director of Operations, the Chairman oversees the NRC's day to day operations and can direct its staff to undertake important initiatives. The Chairman also

participates in international forums, to represent the NRC's premier role as the global leader in nuclear energy regulation. Now, the NRC has been thrust further into the center of the national energy conversation.

Recently, President Trump signed a series of executive orders intended to expedite the rapid deployment of more nuclear power. Those executive orders are aligned with the ADVANCE Act, but must be carefully implemented to create durable, predictable policies for nuclear licensing. A rapid and disruptive change to the nuclear regulatory framework would be counterproductive and potentially impact financial investment.

The Chairman and the Commission must prioritize NRC's actions, being mindful of the need for regulatory stability, as expeditiously and efficiently as possible while keeping nuclear safety central to the agency's mission. That is why experienced leadership at the Commission is crucial to achieve these objectives.

Chairman Wright has served as a member of the Commission since 2018, and President Trump designated him Chairman in January. His experiences provide the necessary background and understanding to navigate the extremely important and challenging task of simultaneously implementing the ADVANCE Act, and the executive orders, while ensuring fundamental licensing activities are not overlooked. I look forward to understanding

how Chairman Wright will navigate these important priorities.

Today, we will also hear from Usha-Maria Turner, President Trump's nominee to serve as the EPA Assistant Administrator for the Office of International and Tribal Affairs. If confirmed, Ms. Turner will lead EPA's efforts to maintain our international environmental agreements and partnerships in coordination with the Department of State.

Ms. Turner will also oversee EPA's engagements with tribal governments in implementing our Nation's environmental laws and helping our tribal governments administer their own environmental programs. Effectively supporting the President's foreign policy efforts and coordinating with tribal governments are vital issues that will help the EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment.

I look forward to discussing the various aspects of this role with Ms. Turner.

With that, I will now recognize Ranking Member Whitehouse for his opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Senator Capito follows:]

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, Chair Capito, and thank you both for being here today.

The United States is on the cusp of a domestic nuclear renaissance. We are seeing remarkable innovation in and appetite for nuclear power, and it is just in time.

Nuclear is an important tool to cut emissions in the power and industrial sectors. It is also key to meeting our Nation's power needs safely. Demand for electricity is expected to increase more than 50 percent through 2050, and without alternative sources like nuclear, we will be unable to sustain our economic growth.

Many of us in Congress have been working for years, on a bipartisan basis, to prepare the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for this moment. I have been the Democratic lead on the past three major bipartisan nuclear reform bills passed into law: the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act, with Senator Crapo, the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act, with Senator Barrasso, and the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act with our Chair. These laws well position the NRC for an era of renewed safe nuclear deployment.

This should be the backdrop for this re-nomination hearing.

Unfortunately, it is not where we find ourselves.

Despite so much commonsense, bipartisan work, the Trump Administration has upended progress in a flamingly partisan manner, in this case, by DOGE-ing the NRC in flagrant disregard for nuclear safety, the bipartisan direction of Congress, and for the law.

First came hyper-partisan attacks on independent regulatory agencies writ large. Then came executive orders demanding redundant, unreasonable, or legally dubious changes to American nuclear licensing.

Then came the DOGE staffers, without any substantive experience, barreling into the NRC and pushing out highly qualified, experienced, technical senior staff. And then came the illegal and baseless firing of NRC Commissioner and former Chair Chris Hanson, the first removal of any NRC commissioner in its 50-year history.

The NRC ought to be a stable pillar of America's nuclear renaissance. Anyone in the nuclear industry will tell you that safety and public trust are foundational to the continued safe operation of our existing nuclear fleet, let alone our overdue progress into new reactors and technologies.

To ensure that we can build and operate nuclear reactors safely while also powering our communities with clean, reliable electricity, Congress separated the regulatory entity, the NRC,

from the technology promoter, the DOE. The separation ensures we can lead the world on nuclear innovation and maintain effective oversight.

The tumult at the NRC is not what members on either side of the aisle wanted. It has created chaos that will introduce unnecessary procedural roadblocks and slow down nuclear licensing. It will push out expert staff at a time when we need to retain all current talent and attract new expertise to oversee the deployment of next-generation nuclear technologies.

It will add legal and regulatory uncertainty that will impede project development. And that is saying nothing of the myriad other ways that other cuts to IRA tax credits, DOE's Loan Programs Office, and other key programs will undermine nuclear deployment in America.

All that said, Chairman Wright, I support the President's re-nomination of you. You are a qualified nominee. I hope that you can address the current upheaval quickly and that you can actually lead the agency as chair.

Should you be confirmed, I ask that you commit to us, a bipartisan committee that will hold you to account on a bipartisan basis, that you will do as the law provides: uphold NRC independence, adhere to its mission, and effectively, efficiently, and faithfully execute the laws passed by Congress.

As to Ms. Turner's nomination to lead the Office of

International and Tribal Affairs at EPA. Trump's EPA unfortunately has become a cesspool of fossil fuel-driven corruption, even weaponizing the justice system to serve the interests of the polluters.

We have reached the point where any nominee President Trump sends to EPA should be treated with skepticism. This nominee has spent her entire career working for gas utilities and fossil fuel companies, including, most recently, Chesapeake Energy, one of a handful invited to attend fossil fuel megadonor Harold Hamm's Mar-a-Lago fundraiser, where President Trump promised Big Oil executives carte blanche over environmental regulations in exchange for money for his campaign.

The corruption and conflicts of interest are happening in plain view. Nothing against you, Ms. Turner, but because of what is happening at EPA, I cannot support this nomination.

And somebody is chairing for the Chair.

[The prepared statement of Senator Whitehouse follows:]

Senator Ricketts. [Presiding.] I was just waiting for you to finish up, Senator. Thank you very much.

Senator Whitehouse. You got it.

Senator Ricketts. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse.

I will now introduce our nominees. Our first nominee is the Honorable David Wright, currently serving as President Trump's designee to be chair of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Having served as the NRC Commissioner since May 2018, Chairman Wright has guided the commission in implementing the ADVANCE Act, and ensuring nuclear safety remains the commission's priority.

His leadership is informed by years of public service and advising on nuclear and broader energy issues. Welcome, Chairman Wright.

Our second nominee under consideration is Usha-Maria Turner, tapped by the President to serve as the Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs. Ms. Turner currently serves as a senior advisor to the EPA Administrator, Lee Zeldin.

An engineer by training, she joined the EPA in March, following a 25-year career working on key environmental and energy issues across Oklahoma and Texas. Welcome, Ms. Turner, and congratulations to both of you on your nominations.

Before we move into opening statements for the nominees, I

will administer the oath to receive their sworn testimony. So I will ask you both to please stand and raise your right hand and answer the following question.

Do you swear the testimony you are about to give to this committee is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. Wright. Yes.

Ms. Turner. Yes.

Senator Ricketts. Great. Thank you very much. Let the record show that the witnesses have answered the question in the affirmative.

So now we will hear from our nominees. Ms. Turner, we will start with you. When you are ready, please proceed.

STATEMENT OF USHA-MARIA TURNER, OF OKLAHOMA, NOMINATED TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY FOR THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Turner. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse and members of this committee. I am honored to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee to be the Assistant Administrator for International and Tribal Affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

I want to express my deep gratitude to President Trump and to Administrator Zeldin for the confidence and trust that they have put in me through this nomination. It is truly humbling. If confirmed, I promise to faithfully execute my duties at EPA, consistent with the Administration's policies and EPA's statutory authority.

I am joined today by some very important and proud people in my life sitting behind me: my husband Neil, my son Alex, my big brother Akhil and his daughter, Nara. My college senior has just started her summer internship but is watching online as are my parents from the country of Trinidad.

I have spent a proud 25 rewarding years working for companies within the electric utility, natural gas and coal production sectors, foundationally in environmental public policy and compliance programs across multiple Federal and State

agencies. This experience ingrained in me, a deep understanding of regulatory frameworks and that economic development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive.

My early career years included conducting environmental compliance audits where I gained an appreciation for the law and the importance of compliance and governance programs. I spent the rest of my career in increasingly expanding public policy roles that brought me into working with the legislative branch and the statutes and rulemaking processes behind the frameworks that I was once auditing.

As my roles increased, my regulatory experience touched the large-scale retirement of baseload power generation, the resulting economic impacts on local communities, the influence of revolutionizing technology on energy markets and the now inextricable connection between energy and economic security, environmental regulation and quality of life.

Throughout my career, I have worked in collaboration with EPA, States, industry, non-profits and others on a number of issues from assessing cross-border air quality impacts from our southern neighbor, to regulating global pollutants like mercury and numerous rulemaking efforts across several program offices.

EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs leads EPA's international and tribal engagements, working across a multitude of areas and stakeholders within EPA's core mission of

protecting human health and the environment. On the international side is the ever-growing reality that pollution does not respect international boundaries and environmental issues are a part of global trade dynamics.

OITA is EPA's lead office with other Federal agencies and international organizations, engaging in environmental negotiations consistent with EPA's core mission and furthering U.S. policy and trade interests abroad.

OITA is also EPA's lead office on tribal issues. Honoring a government-to-government relationship, OITA guides the agency-wide effort to strengthen public health and environmental protection among the 574 federally-recognized tribes and Alaskan Native Villages in Indian Country, with a focus on enabling tribal nations to administer their own environmental programs and, carrying out its Federal trust responsibility.

As an engineer by training, I am wired as a problem solver and drive for results. By my experience, I have worked through balancing economic prosperity and environmental protection, respecting the legal frameworks governing industry and its regulators. Should I be confirmed, I look forward to bringing this experience to implementing the Administration's America's First Policy within EPA's core mission, domestically and abroad.

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Whitehouse, I thank you for the invitation to be here today, and I look forward to the

dialogue.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Turner follows:]

Senator Ricketts. Great. Thank you, Ms. Turner.

Mr. Wright, we will go ahead and turn to you for a five-minute opening statement.

STATEMENT OF DAVID A. WRIGHT, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Mr. Wright. Thank you very much, and good morning. I would like to welcome my Congressman from South Carolina, Joe Wilson, as well. We have been friends for 50 years.

So good morning, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I also want to take a moment to your staffs, especially Adam Tomlinson, Andy Zaak and Kara Allen. And I want to thank President Trump for the opportunity to serve as Chairman, and I am honored that he has renominated me for another five-year term. I would be deeply honored to continue my service to the Country leading the Nuclear Regulatory Commission during this pivotal moment for nuclear power.

As Chairman and as Commissioner, I am committed to our mission and dedicated to our people. The United States is the gold standard nuclear safety regulator, and we must continue to leverage our expertise in today's dynamic and fast-changing world to facilitate the safe use and deployment of nuclear technologies and radioactive materials.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the commission for their collegial approach to the work that we do. While we may not always agree, our interactions are always professional and

constructive. Working together as a commission, we have been able to tackle challenging issues as we advance, enable, and deploy nuclear technologies for the future.

I would also like to thank the NRC staff. The NRC is a great place to work, to connect, and to grow professionally, and in my opinion, they are truly some of the best and brightest in the Federal Government.

Almost a year ago now, the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act, or the ADVANCE Act, was signed into law. The future of nuclear energy and radioactive materials in this Country is at a crossroads, and through the implementation of the ADVANCE Act, the NRC is in a strong position to deliver the energy and security needs of our Country.

The ADVANCE Act does not lower our safety standards but refocuses the NRC on mission-critical and safety-significant items for the benefit of society. We will embrace a culture that efficiently resolves issues and then moves on to the next.

The President directed the NRC in Executive Order 14300 to prioritize efficient licensing and reestablish the United States as the global leader in nuclear energy. The NRC will continue to enable the safe and secure use and deployment of nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials.

If reconfirmed, I look forward to continuing to implement

the ADVANCE Act and the President's priorities, while always keeping my eyes on the principles laid out for us since the inception of this agency.

Safety is and always will be our north star. It is imperative that the NRC facilitate pathways for safe licensing of nuclear technology, not impede its progress. In this light, I would like to highlight some recent agency decisions and accomplishments under my leadership.

The commission's decision to use a source material framework to license emerging technologies for the remediation of mine waste balances the urgency of solving this problem with the need for predictability for applicants and licensees. Likewise, the commission's revision of the duration of design certifications, to extend them from the current 15-year period to 40 years, will provide significant regulatory certainty for the nuclear industry.

This rulemaking is based on the decades of experience the NRC has gained through seven successfully certified designs, and when complete, will allow the NRC to leverage this experience to update regulations that cause an unnecessary burden for no safety benefit.

Additionally, the commission approved a risk-informed, technology-inclusive plan to streamline the licensing for microreactors. This plan will allow for the loading of fuel at

a manufacturing site while maintaining technologies in place to prevent criticality while in transit to a deployment site.

Finally, the NRC approved NuScale's small modular reactor design. The NRC's review was completed ahead of schedule and under budget, demonstrating the agency's commitment to safely and efficiently enabling new, advanced reactor technology.

These examples show that the NRC can safely license advanced reactors and nuclear technology in a manner that does not impede its progress. If reconfirmed, I will continue to move the agency forward.

I would like to close by stating that Congress and this administration has made their intentions to the NRC clear; that safety will always be our strike zone over home plate, our north star, as we seek to embrace a culture of efficiency within the commission and the important work we perform.

If reconfirmed, I look forward to continuing to lead the NRC and achieving energy dominance in this great Nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wright follows:]

Senator Ricketts. Great. Thank you, Chairman Wright.

I look forward to hearing from both of you how you are going to continue to serve Americans and Nebraskans.

We will now begin a five-minute round of questioning. I am going to start, since Chairman Capito is not here.

Ms. Turner, when we met, we discussed Nebraska's tribes, and in particular, as you know, the Santee Sioux Tribe is facing ongoing water quality challenges. A no-drink order has been issued by the EPA in 2019, due to high manganese levels. The tribe still trucks in potable water to this day.

The tribe is actively working to upgrade its water infrastructure. EPA Region 7 has been collaborating with the tribe to conduct critical water testing, but long-term solutions are still needed.

Ms. Turner, if you are confirmed, how do you plan to work with the tribes, including the Santee Sioux and regional EPA staff, to ensure tribal partners will always have access to clean water?

Ms. Turner. Senator Ricketts, thank you for that question. I do appreciate you making the time personally to meet with you whenever it was, a week ago or so. I hope things are going well in the moving into the new office.

Senator Ricketts. We are still in process.

[Laughter.]

Ms. Turner. Good. Well, I wish you well.

Yours is an important question and I appreciate you raising the issue of the Santee Sioux access to drinking water, not just compliant with EPA's drinking water quality standards, but certainly in the accessibility to it and the adequacy of it in meeting tribal needs. And any community's needs is a key priority within EPA's core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Should I be confirmed in this role as Assistant Administrator, I will make it a priority. I have already looked into this a little bit. I would like to sit with the Office of Water, understand where we are, where EPA is, where the perhaps the roadblocks or the delays are, work with the tribe, absolutely, meet the tribe where they need to be met at, make sure that our consultation process is being followed appropriately.

But importantly, again, as an engineer by training, I hate a problem being put in front of me that we can't see a path through. And so you have my commitment to work with your office, the tribe, the other EPA offices, to see where those roadblocks are and to try to make this happen.

Senator Ricketts. Great. Great. Well, I encourage you to go visit, that would be great, that would be wonderful to have you in Nebraska.

Ms. Turner. I would love to.

Senator Ricketts. Okay.

Nebraska is also very proud of our nuclear power. It is clean, safe, and reliable. Our Cooper Nuclear Station is an 835-megawatt facility that can generate power for about 385,000 residences, even in the hottest part of the summers, days like today. We look to continue to see how we can expand it going forward.

Nuclear energy is a vital part of America's all-of-the-above energy future. Last year, I voted for the Bipartisan ADVANCE Act to support this. President Trump recently issued four executive orders designed to bolster domestic energy development and supply chains and accelerate regulatory timelines for nuclear technology licensing.

Chairman Wright, you have been very involved in the implementation of the ADVANCE Act, as mentioned in your opening remarks, working to streamline the licensing process so that licenses are not, as you have said, the long pole in the tent between what Congress has directed and what the President has directed, the NRC has a clear goal.

Chairman Wright, how important is the streamlining process to deliver on the whole-of-government directives, and what can Congress to do be able to continue to help?

Mr. Wright. Senator, thank you so much for the question.

So first off, the whole-of-government approach is necessary. I mean, it is all about energy security and energy independence, and making sure that we have the power that we need to do the things we need to do in this Country. And quite honestly, around the world as well.

The ADVANCE Act, by the way, and thank you for, on behalf of the NRC and myself, the Senate did a wonderful job in putting that legislation together. There is a lot of things that are in there that actually help the NRC become more efficient and are helping us focus on the goals, timeliness goals, setting aggressive goals to get some of these advanced reactors or micro-reactors, these technologies moving.

We are ahead of the curve on this. The advanced reactor side of our house that is being remodeled is actually a shining star. We have 25 vendors that are before us right now in some form of early engagement. We have another five that have already gone through the process of, you have NuScale that has got their design certification already. They can go to market. You have got TerraPower that is two months ahead of schedule. You have got Kairos that has gotten two approvals from us and they are turning dirt at Oak Ridge.

You have got Dow Chemical and X-Energy that have an application before us for four of the XE-100s. And they are moving forward, but they just came in a couple of months ago.

And now we have got the BWRX-300 which is, as you know, from the agreement that we have, a memorandum of cooperation with Canada. The UK is a part of that now, Poland is an observer, and we are working with TVA and Duke, all trying to put together packages of data that can be used by either country in support of their application, so that, still allowing us the sovereign right to review and approve the license ourselves.

So we have got a lot that is going on. And quite honestly, the ADVANCE Act and a lot of the parts of the executive orders from the White House, they align on this, as was mentioned by Senator Capito earlier.

Senator Ricketts. So I am out of time, but is there anything Congress needs to do to be able to help you, or with the ADVANCE Act, do you think you have enough on your plate to be able to continue to push this forward?

Mr. Wright. Well, I know that we are, everything is still working on the environmental side of things, you know, trying to get things compressed, trying to move everything to the left, safety, the reviews, anything we can do to gain efficiencies.

There are some things that we can't do that might have to, you know, like the mandatory hearing elimination, that is not anything we can do. We have done as much as we can do at the NRC, but that could be something that a future, that future legislation could address.

And as I told you in our meeting, I think I met with you back in February, as I did with many of the members of this committee, we are going to stay in touch with you, give you, if there are things that we think we need, we are going to come to you about it.

Senator Ricketts. Thank you very much.

Senator Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Thanks, Chairman.

Let me start by recognizing Congressman Wilson for being here. My apologies for not recognizing you earlier. I hadn't looked beyond the table. The Congressman and I worked together on the Helsinki Commission and on supporting Ukraine, and I am delighted to welcome you and apologize for not noting your presence earlier.

Ms. Turner, before you joined EPA, your most recent role was with Chesapeake Energy, now Expand Energy, which was one of a handful of companies at a 20-person fundraiser for then-candidate Trump hosted by oil billionaire Harold Hamm at Mar-A-Lago. It was widely reported that Mr. Trump there asked the attendees to donate a billion dollars to his presidential campaign, because if elected, in return, he would roll back environmental rules for the oil industry.

Can you confirm today that Chesapeake's CEO, Nick Dell'Osso, was present at that gathering?

Ms. Turner. Senator Whitehouse, good morning. It is good to meet you, even if it is in this circumstances, as it is, good to meet you.

And thank you for the question. And yes, I spent two proud years at Chesapeake Energy, now Expand. It is my understanding that Mr. Dell'Osso was at that event.

Senator Whitehouse. Were you, or anyone reporting to you, present at that gathering?

Ms. Turner. No, sir, I was not.

Senator Whitehouse. Or anyone reporting to you?

Ms. Turner. No one reporting to me.

Senator Whitehouse. Did you at any point help prepare materials shared with the Trump campaign or any affiliated PACs related to that gathering, before or after?

Ms. Turner. Senator, I was not part of preparing any material for Mr. Dell'Osso's trip to see the President, the nominee for president.

Senator Whitehouse. Did you have any engagement with the campaign or any affiliated PACs, including the preparation of material for them?

Ms. Turner. No, sir, I did not.

Senator Whitehouse. Did you at any point communicate with executives of other companies that were present at that gathering concerning the topics of that discussion?

Ms. Turner. Senator, I am, I am aware that my CEO at the time attended that gathering. I was not part of any of the preparation of any material or any, I did not have any interactions with any of the campaign staff. This was very much an outreach to the CEO level.

So no, I was not engaged.

Senator Whitehouse. Are you aware of any agreement, exchange, or other arrangement that Mr. Dell'Osso entered into related to that gathering at Mar-A-Lago?

Ms. Turner. Senator, again, as I wasn't there and I wasn't part of the preparation for any of that, I am not aware that any agreement or commitment or anything similar was either discussed or agreed to.

Senator Whitehouse. Do you know if the proposition was discussed at executive or board meetings at Chesapeake?

Ms. Turner. Senator, I remember seeing what was in the news afterwards. But I do not recall -- I wasn't there, and so to speculate on what was said or not said, I simply was not there.

Senator Whitehouse. Were you in a position to get the board packages, or review the board packages that Chesapeake prepared for its board members at board meetings?

Ms. Turner. Senator, in my capacity as Chief Sustainability Officer for Chesapeake, my involvement with our

board was advising them on sustainability matters, on reporting under sustainability frameworks, but not on board packages related to anything related to Mr. Dell'Osso's visit to see the presidential nominee.

Senator Whitehouse. So you would not have seen, you know, a company when it has a board meeting puts together a package for the board for the meeting, and that is customarily reviewed by senior staff, not just their piece of it, but the package as a whole, you did not review any such board meeting prep packages?

Ms. Turner. Certainly I have seen board meeting packages that get developed when we have board meetings periodically, as we are required to do. I have no recollection of seeing any material related to that visit.

Senator Whitehouse. Mar-A-Lago proposition?

Ms. Turner. Not at all.

Senator Whitehouse. After that gathering, an oil industry lobbyist told Politico, "We are going to have to write exactly what we want, actually spoon-feeding the administration. There is 27-page drafts moving around Washington." Are you aware of Chesapeake participating in drafting that language referred to by this oil industry lobbyist?

Ms. Turner. Senator, I haven't seen nor am I aware that Chesapeake was involved in any of the material associated with

that visit.

Senator Whitehouse. All right. My time has expired. Thank you very much for your answers.

Senator Capito. [Presiding.] Thank you, and thank you, Senator Ricketts, for filling in and helping us out here.

First question is for Mr. Wright. It is good to see you again. You obviously know this, but responsible for appointing the staff, subject to commission approval, and I understand that several have left with top expertise and technical expertise. So as you select senior NRC leadership, how do you evaluate the respective candidate's ability to lead, make decisions, and inspire a culture change at the NRC?

Mr. Wright. Thank you for the question, Senator. So this is not a new phenomenon at the agency. We have had, we have got a large portion of our employees who are at retirement age, and we have known that probably since before COVID hit. And they started, the agency started developing a plan, a strategic workforce plan to address those.

The Senate helped out greatly with the ADVANCE Act by giving us additional hiring authorities to direct hire, which we are using. So people are going to retire, it is going to happen, it has happened to me everywhere I have been, running business, being a State agency head, being a mayor of a town, all those, those things happen all the time. And I have to

respect when somebody says they want to retire, they are doing it for personal reasons or for family reasons, and I have to honor that.

Having said that, the way I learned the agency is, I went out among the people, I went and walked all the offices, I learned who they were, what they did, how they did what they did and how they supported me. I could observe them in every situation, you know, whether they were a parent, a grandparent, who they supported, just by being in their office, observing.

And then I got to know them personally over the last seven years. And yes, I know a lot of them, we might be able to do some deep selects on some people because they are probably ready and looking for their time. There was a period where we were really shrinking after the first renaissance came down and opportunity wasn't there. Now we are going to start to grow a little bit again because of all the work that is coming. And we have people who are passionate about what they do.

And the ones who are going to stay are going to run this agency and they are going to run it well. I am excited about the future. But this is a bump in the road that we are going to have to address, and we are.

Senator Capito. I do think the authority that we gave you in the ADVANCE Act should be very helpful.

Mr. Wright. Very much.

Senator Capito. I know that the whole hiring procedures at any agency is very difficult, and we wanted to alleviate that because of the upcoming technologies that we really want to see online with our energy appetite.

Ms. Turner, what would you say as Assistant Administrator of International and Tribal Affairs, what are some of the international environmental agreements, conventions or partnerships that you would expect to prioritize?

Ms. Turner. Senator Capito, good morning. I haven't had a chance to say that to you yet.

Senator Capito. Good to see you.

Ms. Turner. And again, I also thank you for taking the time personally to meet with me. When we met with you, that was a very enjoyable visit.

And I appreciate the question. I think this is an important space, with so much happening internationally. There is a number of things that, should I be confirmed in this role, that the Office of International and Tribal Affairs I think will engage in.

I will say, however, that it is the U.S. Government's policy that it is the Department of State that sets international policy. That direction, of course, comes from the White House, and EPA lends its technical expertise in the environmental space to the Department of State.

So going forward, we defer to the Department of State as to which international engagements they choose to further the administration's policy in. Having said that, there are a number of international engagements that we have already attended and participated in, things like Basel Rotterdam Stockholm, which deals with hazardous waste, transportation, chemicals. Very interesting engagement around PFAS in the Arctic environment, which EPA has engaged in with the State Department and a number of other countries.

And think some of what we keep an eye out for is some of the developing technology space, and things that do our international programs cover adequately, mining of critical minerals and the setting of standards around that, which EPA is also currently engaged in.

So it will be interesting to watch, as the technology develops and the response needed out of those international conventions as to any changes that may come and lending that incredible EPA expertise to the Department of State as we engage. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Padilla?

Senator Padilla. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to begin by addressing the recent firing of Commissioner Chris Hanson. This firing was without cause and

contrary to existing law and longstanding precedent regarding the removal of independent agency appointees.

Chris Hanson was an exceptional public servant who upheld the highest levels of integrity. This political firing is not just troubling on its face, but will hamper the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's critical work and erode the essential trust and responsibility that the NRC holds.

I share this colleagues, because it is important context as we consider Commissioner Wright's nomination.

As the sole member of both this committee and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I want to make sure I draw my colleagues' attention to the recent reports that the Trump administration is proposing to shift some nuclear licensing responsibilities away from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and to the Department of Energy, and essentially turning the NRC into a rubber stamp rather than a trusted safety regulator.

This effort has direct implications, colleagues, for the jurisdictional prerogatives of this committee and our oversight responsibility concerning nuclear power and safety. This is not a straightforward effort to simply streamline the Federal Government. Instead, I fear it could have significant implications for the safety of our nuclear power industry, and more importantly, for the trust of the American people in nuclear energy.

There are some people who approach this conversation as fans and boosters of nuclear energy and want more. There are others who approach this conversation in the belief that nuclear energy is key to achieving our climate objectives. Either way, when it comes to anything related to nuclear energy and the public trust, we have to recognize that once you break the public trust, it is very hard to rebuild it.

Madam Chair, I urge you to ensure that this committee protects its jurisdiction and independence of the NRC, and must block any effort that would cause the American people to have any reason to doubt the safety of nuclear power.

Now to my first question. I am proud to represent the State of California, where we are not just home to the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station, which is in the process of being completely decommissioned, we are also home to the Diablo Canyon, which is still generating nuclear energy.

We are also home to earthquakes and a number of significant faults. So seismic safety as it pertains to the nuclear energy conversation is very important to me, since long before I served as chair of the State Senate Committee on Energy, Utility, and Communications when I was in the legislature.

And so with that context, I want to ask a question of Mr. Wright. What steps, Mr. Wright, will you take to ensure that communities located near reactors can feel safe in the event of

an earthquake?

Mr. Wright. Senator Padilla, thank you for the question. And by the way, thank you for taking the time to meet with me back ion February. I pulled you off the Floor and you made time for us. It was a good conversation. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your team and your office.

So we already do very detailed assessments, and the NRC requires our licensees to do these assessments on seismic and flooding and other major natural disaster type things that could happen. It is all part of our calculation and their safety bases, right? So we have got margin, some people refer to it as orders of magnitude above what is needed. And we have the experience to evaluate this, and we do it, regularly, and we can do it site-specific at any time, using current data or any new data that might come up there. We are going to stay on top of that.

Senator Padilla. Mr. Wright, I want to thank you. I am going to have a lot more to say about this, but at least you have gotten the beginning on the record. I will just emphasize the need for the technical assessment capabilities at the NRC, the independence of the NRC, and communicating with the public for public confidence purposes.

But in my limited time, I want to at least ask one question of Ms. Turner. I appreciate the comments you have made as it

pertains to international engagement and policy setting. My question is domestic. Tribal consultation is critical to ensuring that the voices and sovereignty of tribal governments are respected in the Federal decision-making process. You are from Oklahoma, home to the second largest number of federally-recognized tribes, California being the first.

So just a very fundamental question: What is your understanding of sovereignty, and what would be your philosophy or push to genuine tribal consultation, should you be confirmed?

Ms. Turner. Senator Padilla, thank you for that question. I appreciate the question, again, coming from Oklahoma, which is the land of 39 tribes. We are very proud to say that, anyone from Oklahoma, whether you are a member of a tribal nation or not.

Tribal consultation is a core policy, is a core tenet for EPA in the Office of International and Tribal Affairs. The 574 recognized tribes in the U.S. are accepted, are recognized, are understood to be sovereign nations.

And as such, and EPA as far back as 1984, because of that, established an Indian policy which really identifies two very important things. One is that we recognize the sovereignty of those nations. As such, we treat them as a government-to-government entity. They are not a subsidiary or a subset of anything else. They are indeed sovereign nations.

And as such, we work toward enabling their ability to oversee the environmental trust of their own lands. They know their lands better than we do. And one of EPA's core responsibilities from within the Office of International and Tribal Affairs is to work with them to see that as they are able and to meet them where they are at. Tribes, as we know in Oklahoma, are of various sizes and various histories, various resources.

So to meet them where they need to be met at, to enable their journey toward treatment as a State, I almost dislike the term treatment as a State, but it is a term we use. They are not States, they are sovereign nations.

But work toward their abilities to develop the capacity to oversee environmental programs on their own lands. And that is something that EPA takes very importantly.

Senator Padilla. Okay, thank you. Madam Chair, I have a follow-up question, which I will submit for the record.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Curtis?

Senator Curtis. Thank you. And to the senior Senator from California, I think I heard you say California had a lot of faults.

Senator Padilla. Earthquake faults, to be precise.

Senator Curtis. Just clarifying. Actually, Senator, I

really appreciate the work we have had together on Fix Our Forests. I appreciate the good work that you are doing.

Ms. Turner and Mayor Wright, may I use that term? I continue to believe that mayor is one of the best public positions that we can hold. As mayors, you have to be nimble, you have to deliver results, you have pragmatic accountability and it is my experience that those are all important things in this current role that you are approaching as well. I appreciate your service there.

We have had a conversation to talk about Utah, and as you know, Utah aspires to be a centerpiece in nuclear as we move forward. It is just a great solution to clean baseload. And as you are aware, we have had some attempts, not always successful. I am curious how the NRC can work with our entities in the State on fast-forwards and specifically lessons learned, so that we can make this a reality in Utah.

Mr. Wright. So first off, once a mayor, always a mayor. Right, mayor? So you know, I know that there has been some issues there with UAMPS and then everything. We are a safety regulatory, right? So we, utilities and other nuclear companies out there, companies that have nuclear, they make decision on their energy assets, whether it is nuclear, gas, or anything else, they make that in the board room. We are not a part of that financial discussion.

But what we are committed to as a safety regulator is to get, to collaborate with the States like Utah, to have discussions early on things that they are looking at, maybe technologies they are looking at, or other permits that they are looking at, early site permits or things like that.

And we commit to getting it done efficiently. We have been getting our house in order to do that. That is the lesson learned that we took from the early work with NuScale. We learned how to put core teams together, tiger teams together to break things apart, so to speak, and to project manage each one of them.

And the advanced reactor side of our house is a shining star right now. We are ahead of the game in every area there, and we are going to make sure that we can get everything done that needs to get done. We are not going to be the problem.

Senator Curtis. Thank you. I was really proud last Congress, in the House, to have my bill, the Advanced Nuclear Reactor Prize Act, become law as part of the ADVANCE Act. That legislation was built on this simple premise that if we want to foster innovation and clean energy, we have to reward and support first movers. And that starts with certainty and clarity, and I think you referred to some of that.

I think for any emerging technology, especially advanced nuclear, the clear rules of the road are not just helpful but

really mandatory.

So my question is, how can the NRC assure that applicants, whether they are startups or utilities, know what to expect as they navigate the licensing process? You mentioned efficiency on your end. But you can well imagine, a municipality or others that might take this process, it is kind of what I would call a big gray cloud, and how they penetrate and move forward, how can the NRC help with that?

Mr. Wright. Well, first off, we have to be transparent about everything, and we have to provide clarity along the way. We need to be sure that we are truly communicating what needs to be done and we are not playing hide the rock with the people who come before us.

Although we are not "not supposed to be consultants" or to be promoters, we do promote nuclear safety. That is one thing we do. And if we know the answer to what an applicant might need to get a decision reached by us, we have to share that information with them. We shouldn't hide it, right?

So we have to be transparent.

Senator Curtis. I think if you look at the ADVANCE Act and executive orders, you will see a lot of this is aimed at ensuring that the applicants have the efficiency, that there is transparency, they have the best possible chance of making that through.

Leaning on your past service on the commission, how do you think that has prepared you to move forward and deal with some of these, and what are kind of the lessons learned for you?

Mr. Wright. So, Senator, every part of my life, my life experience has taught me, and I apply it today, I am a colon cancer survivor, as is my daughter, and having to fight that battle with both of us, for both of us, and as a dad, in support of a daughter, you learn a lot about mettle and about what you are made of.

As a mayor, you have already spoken to this, you have to be nimble. That is the closest to the people you are going to get. I didn't even leave the town to buy gas; I bought everything inside the town. You have to support your people.

Senator Curtis. Can't jaywalk in your own town, either, when you are mayor.

Mr. Wright. Exactly. So everything I learned about leadership came from either cancer, baseball, or serving as mayor of a small town. And in the end, it is about people. It just about people and leading people to do --

Senator Curtis. Thank you. I am out of time, Ms. Turner. I am out of time; I am sorry I don't have questions for you as well. But thank you for being here today, and I look forward to getting to know you better as well.

Thank you. I yield.

Senator Capito. Yes, thank you.

Senator Husted?

Senator Husted. Thank you, Chairwoman Capito.

Mr. Wright, thank you for being with us today. I appreciate you taking the time to visit with me. We had a wonderful conversation. You know of my great interest in nuclear energy. As a Senator from Ohio, we have a great demand for electricity, an increasing demand, at almost an alarming rate, for very good reasons.

We are a manufacturing State, so as we do made in America, we need to make more things, which requires more energy. We are a data center State, which means that as America tries to lead in AI, our increasing energy demands with data centers are almost unfathomable, the increase in demand. And then of course, electric vehicles and other things are creating more and more demand.

I know that in the last couple of days, we have seen some interrupted services around the Country, a lot of that is because of the grid, not because of generation. But it is important. And this is really a bipartisan issue, because nuclear energy is one of those, is a form of energy that addresses both needs, the environmental need of zero carbon but also the baseload energy that provides for 24/7, 365 power which is necessary for all of these components.

However, America is overly reliant on foreign manufacturers of enriched uranium for our nuclear facilities. We have the only American-owned uranium enrichment company in Portsmouth, Ohio, the Piketon Plant, or at the Portsmouth Plant in Piketon, Ohio.

And that, making sure that we continue to support what is happening with American enriched uranium is very important. I know you play a role in that because you want to do two things. You want to provide safety and you want to provide it efficiently. Always a challenge for a regulator.

And recently, I introduced legislation called the Nuclear REFUEL Act, with Ranking Member Whitehouse, which would set clear standards for licensing requirements for nuclear recycling facilities, a new technology that the industry really believes they need clarity on in terms of the rules for how they would be regulated.

I want you, if you would, to give me some thoughts on that and do you agree that there is a need for clarity, and could that create a safety and efficiency opportunity if we pass this legislation?

Mr. Wright. Thank you for the question, Senator. It was an honor to come and meet you in your office and your lovely wife, too, that was a treat.

So you know, without fuel, you can’t run a plant, right?

So we have to have fuel. And we have to have a secure grid, because if you turn the plant on and you can't connect it to the grid, nobody is going to get power. So it doesn't make the plant very useful.

So they all tie together, and it is needed. We currently, our regulatory framework will allow us to do recycling. But having said that, anything, any bill that allows, that gets clarity or allows things to happen more efficiently, is necessary. I am wide open to all of that.

So I look forward to following the progress of the act, to see how it goes, and how it can be implemented, integrated, whatever the word is there, that you want to use. And I know you are talking about Centrus in Piketon.

Senator Husted. Yes. Well, I will just follow up with that. In your experience, you have had experience in this role, you are not new to the job. Give us your perspective on what we can do in the legislative branch of government to provide some more of that clarity that helps you address the issue Senator Padilla just discussed, which is that safety and security, but also the efficiency, because the demand and the real need to go faster is there, and how can we do a better job?

Mr. Wright. Well, first off, legislation like the ADVANCE Act is, I mean, that has been kind of a game changer for us. Because it has allowed us to focus on things and to get more

efficient. And then really now, as we look to reorganize the agency, how are we going to become a more nimble licensing reviewer and certifying these designs in a more efficient manner? We still have to maintain the safety standards, safety case.

So at the moment I am sitting here right now, you have given us the tools to get started. Obviously, you are going to have to have more uranium at some point, right? And I know that the Congress is working on ideas there. And we, I know that we have got strong technical expertise within the agency, we are going to be able to do the revies and the licensing of these facilities.

And we are going to be able to, using your hiring and retention tools that you gave us in the ADVANCE Act, we are going to be able to get the talent that we need if we lack, if there is a gap. SO we will have the workforce we need to support these reviews.

And we are also training people now, the new hires that we have been able to get on board, we are actually cross-training people so that they can be moved to other areas, if the need is there and when the need is there. So I will stay in touch with you about this, though.

Senator Husted. Thank you, and I will just, in closing, I want to add that one of the things that, if we are going to do

more made in America, one of the things that is essential for our economic and national security is enriching our own fuel for these facilities and I hope we can get more of that done domestically.

Thank you, Chairwoman Capito.

Senator Capito. Senator Kelly? Thank you.

Senator Kelly. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to both of our nominees for being here today and your willingness to serve.

I want to start by discussing the topic of abandoned uranium mines. As you know, there are thousands across the western United States. There are over 500 on the Navajo Nation. And we have been working for decades to clean up these abandoned mines.

We have encountered a number of challenges. So I want to start with Chairman Wright. One of these challenges has to do with how easily we can employ new and promising technologies.

As I believe you know, EPA and the Navajo Nation have piloted a technology that could reduce the amount of hazardous waste at an abandoned mine by as much as 85 percent. But this technology hasn't been able to be used more widely because they are awaiting a licensing decision by the NRC.

And in particular, the question I understand NRC has been wrestling with is whether remediation technologies can be

licensed as a service or whether there needs to be a specific site process, basically for each site.

My view is that these technologies should be licensed as a service. On the Navajo Nation alone there are more than 500 abandoned uranium mines requiring, and if you require an NRC license for each of those mines separately, it could take years more to clean them up.

So Chairman Wright, can you explain how you approach this issue on the commission and why you supported a service provider approach?

Mr. Wright. Thank you, Senator Kelly. I was hoping you would ask me a question on Disa, because I, you may know this, I was the first vote cast about three years ago for Option 2(b), long enough, and I actually made that vote public, so that I let it be known to you and to Senator Lummis that you were being heard, okay?

I really think this technology is a game changer, because it is a service provider. And I think that in our, the NRC did kind of direct staff for it to be a service provider framework. Because that is one license. If it was on a site-base thing, you would have to license for every place you go, and that is just, that is way too slow, way too onerous. And I don't think that is the right way to go.

Senator Kelly. So, Mr. Chairman, when do you think the

first license is going to be issued?

Mr. Wright. Ah, so, they filed their application in March. We have a detailed, we accepted it for, their application, for detailed review April the 11th. And I think it is on track to complete the review by September of this year.

Senator Kelly. Great. Great news, thank you.

Ms. Turner, if you are confirmed, you will be the senior official at EPA responsible for tribal issues. So I want to get your thoughts on this as well. In the first Trump administration, EPA led the development of a 10-year plan to address uranium contamination on the Navajo Nation, which is the framework still used by EPA and the Navajo Nation to guide these cleanup efforts.

If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring EPA continues to carry out the work laid out in the 10-year plan?

Ms. Turner. Senator Kelly, good morning. And I want to first thank your staff for taking time to meet with me and bring this issue to my attention. I think I ran into you in the elevator afterwards, and I think you asked me a very interesting question, which is why tribal and international are together. I have an answer for you, but I will answer your uranium mines question.

Not being confirmed in this role, I, well, I will put it the other way. Once I am confirmed and should I have the honor

of being confirmed in this role, having boots on the ground in this area for this topic is something that I very much look forward to. It is one of many issues within EPA's halls that have been going on too long, that if you are members of the nation that either are directly or indirectly impacted, it is unacceptable that it has gone on this long.

I do want you to know that this is a priority for this administrator. President Nygren was in our offices not that long ago supporting the repeal of the Clean Power Plan. He did sit down with the administrator and this is one of the issues that came up.

So should I be confirmed in this role, this is one of the first things I do look forward to engaging in, understanding what is in the 10-year plan, understanding what potentially is delaying the 10-year plan, the agreements that EPA has made under that plan.

Whenever you have got multi-agency engagements trying to solve a problem like this, you can see where there are potentials for delays. In the tribal consultation space alone, I think there is something like 18 different tribal consultation policies within the U.S. Government.

So I do very much look forward to engaging in this issue, understanding where the delays are, and seeing what we can do at EPA, should I be confirmed.

Senator Kelly. So, Ms. Turner, it sounds like you are committed to the 10-year plan, you just want to make sure it gets implemented efficiently.

Ms. Turner. Senator, I would like to understand better what is in the 10-year plan, and understand the responsibilities in that plan that both the NRC, the EPA and any other agency involved has to sit down with the tribe and understand what their needs and wants are, understanding that for them, this needs to be done yesterday.

Senator Kelly. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Boozman?

Senator Boozman. Thank you, Chair Capito. Ms. Turner, it is good to see you. You have an impressive background, which includes delivering reliable and affordable power to communities in Arkansas, including the hometown that I grew up in, Fort Smith. To do such work, it is essential to maintain strong relationships with the local communities, including tribes.

In your previous roles, what successes have you seen in maintaining tribal and community relations that can improve the work of the Office of International and Tribal Affairs?

Ms. Turner. Senator Boozman, good morning. And I do miss working with you. So it is great to see you.

Senator Boozman. That is good to know.

[Laughter.]

Ms. Turner. Somebody misses working with you, right, is what you were saying?

So it is an important question, and I do appreciate the question. Working for an electric utility, and I have worked for several throughout my career, the relationship you have with your communities is paramount. It is not just the communities you operate and serve but it is the communities that are your ratepayers, that people who pay your bills, who are impacted by all the decisions that you make.

When I was, one of the utilities that I worked with, we had some very interesting engagements with, and this is in Oklahoma, as you heard me say earlier, Oklahoma, the land of 39 tribes, there are tribes of different sizes and different wants and needs. Two of the largest tribes in Oklahoma, we were able to work with and develop to distribution level, solar farms. Those were tribes with very large economic growth engines, billions of dollars in economic development. So working with them on something as large and important as that was one experience.

But to your point, the community engagement being first and foremost in how we negotiated agreements and what did they want to see out of this development. One of my favorites is actually something significantly smaller that I did with a, again, starting with community outreach, what are the needs of our

communities, what do they expect out of, at the time the company that I worked for. And this was the Yuchi Tribe, which is not even federally recognized. But it is a small, private business on a parcel of land that I think was about 40 acres, fifth generation Oklahoma family, very proud.

And we were able to work with them on actually something that was mutually beneficial. One of our largest waste streams as an electric utility is actually vegetation management. So we were able to work with them on their being able to re-use some of what we would otherwise have put in a landfill.

It is a relationship that was born right before COVID, sustained them through COVID, and I believe is still in place today.

So I use those examples because I think they are examples of what I keep in mind as I think about being confirmed int his role. In the 574 federally-recognized tribes throughout the Country, their histories are different, their sizes are different, their resources are different. And it is important for EPA in general and in this office to recognize that, and to execute EPA's core mission, its Federal trust responsibility, and meet the tribes where they need to be met at.

Senator Boozman. Very good.

Well, that was really going to be my next question in the sense that communities in Arkansas and throughout the Country

often see major delays in infrastructure projects, like upgrades to water systems, business construction, broadband expansion, because the current process for coordinating between EPA, tribal governments, the Corps of Engineers isn't always the fastest or most effective.

It sounds like you worked hard in your prior capacity to make that work. How do you coordinate amongst those agencies? How do you make it such that it is more transparent, and have greater efficiency across the agencies, so that these projects can get done? The biggest problem that we have is delays in this and that in the sense that it is very ineffective, plus it also increases the cost dramatically.

Ms. Turner. Senator, thank you for that question. It is a good one, it is an important one. And working so long in regulated industry, working for a company that had to site and build infrastructure, I understand that frustration of having to work through multiple agencies on any single project where efficiency and deadlines and meeting customers' wants and needs is potentially compromised.

You are not the first person that we have heard from that has described a frustration in multiple agency projects and timelines and engagement. It is something on my mind as well. And one of the things I first observed is the, again, I mentioned it to Senator Kelly, throughout U.S. Government we

have something like 18 different consultation policies for tribal nations.

Should I be confirmed in the role, that is something I have on my whiteboard, is to want to engage further in, is to understand, is that part of why things aren't getting done? Because different agencies are consulting differently, are there gaps and are there overlaps, other inefficiencies?

The other thing I will say and one of the reasons why I said yes when I was asked to serve in this administration is there is a real commitment, not just by this administration, but by this administrator, to get things moving, to see where the delays are, to streamline permitting processes as we can, and to make things happen where perhaps they have been stalled.

Senator Boozman. Right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Senator Markey?

Senator Markey. Thank you, Madam Chair.

President Trump has ordered the destruction of offshore wind all along the east coast of the United States. That was going to be 30,000 megawatts of electricity coming in. He has ordered the destruction of it, which is a tragedy. He has ordered the destruction of the tax breaks for wind and solar in the bill that is going to come before Congress. That is a tragedy. We have a dramatic rise in AI consumption of electricity, and the President is destroying, President Trump is

destroying our ability to have an all-of-the-above strategy.

And as a result, it is going to put more pressure on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to press forward faster to license new nuclear power plants. It is going to give the natural gas industry an opening to come in where there was no opening in terms of the construction of new plants, because Trump is killing the electrical generation capacity that was the plan for much of the Country, but especially the east coast.

Ninety-four percent of all new electrical generating capacity in the United States installed was wind, solar and battery. Let me say that again: 94 percent of all new installed electrical generation capacity in the United States was wind, solar and battery. Trump has declared war on that.

Now, that puts pressure on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. And that is a danger to me, a real danger, for you to move faster than otherwise you would, as historical legacy, be moving forward. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is facing strange and unprecedented times. This independent agency was created by Congress to do one thing, to regulate civilian nuclear activity with public safety as the first priority.

Independent agencies hold a unique role in our Federal Government. They are supposed to act free from influence by financial or political interests. Commissioners of independent agencies who are confirmed by the Senate are statutorily

protected from removal without cause. This is a precedent that the Supreme Court has respected for 90 years.

Yet over the past five months, this administration has fired Commissioner and former NRC Chair Hanson, without cause. Fired safety-focused staff for no good reason at the behest of DOGE. Forced commission rulemakings which are supposed to be independent, to go through Executive Branch policy review to ensure alignment with Trump's agenda, which of course is to absolutely crush the clean energy revolution for the benefit of the nuclear and natural gas industries. Just to crush this all-of-the-above strategy, and pressure the NRC to accelerate license reviews and cut corners, while ignoring community concerns.

So, Mr. Chairman, if reconfirmed, how will you protect the NRC from attacks that jeopardize its independence and ability to protect public health and safety?

Mr. Wright. Thank you, Senator Markey, for the question. I did enjoy our visit back in March, with you and your staff. I bought your book, too, by the way. Found it at an old library that had closed down.

So, to answer your question, we are accountable, we are an independent agency, we are in the Executive Branch, that is where we are housed, we are accountable to both Congress and the administration. Safety is our strike zone over home plate. It

is our north star. And it will continue to be that. Nothing that has happened so far, nobody has asked us to compromise safety in any way. Nothing has touched safety.

Senator Markey. But it is coming your way, Mr. Chairman. It is coming your way. They are destroying entire industries with no regard ultimately for the safety of the American people from pollution.

Keep going, I am sorry.

Mr. Wright. To me, what I have seen so far, and have been involved in with my colleagues, it has been about process more than anything else, and trying to align our stuff within the agency so that we can be more efficient, which was the goal of the ADVANCE Act, it is aligned --

Senator Markey. Well, let me then turn to this alignment. I would like to turn to the usual public engagement. Today I am reintroducing my NRC Office of Public Engagement and Participation Act, a bill that would establish an office dedicated to keeping communities informed and involved in what is happening in their back yard.

Communities deserve a chance to weigh in on the issues that directly affect their health and safety. And there is nothing like a nuclear power plant coming into your neighborhood that raises safety and health issues.

Over the years, I have learned a great deal from the

communities next to the decommissioning of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Massachusetts. They have fought for transparent, accountable and community-led decision making when it comes to nuclear safety. Unfortunately, NRC's failure to meaningfully engage these communities has eroded trust in the commission.

So, Mr. Wright, if reconfirmed, how do you plan to maintain strong public trust and confidence in the NRC's ability to responsibly and independently regulate civilian nuclear activity through public engagement in hearings and proceedings?

Mr. Wright. Thank you for the question. You know, I am not sure that I totally agree with everything, the comments.

But I will tell you that it is my belief personally that the NRC on public engagement does as good, probably does the best job that any agency in the Federal Government, including my colleague here to the left. We have public meetings, Federal Register notices, we have website announcements, email listservs, social media posts.

And the tribal areas, we will go into the community, do potluck dinners, go to the -- we will translate into the Native languages and print, do radio, do -- they don't have broadband, we go to them to seek their input. So I believe that we, and there is a lot more that we do as well on top of that.

Senator Markey. But I will say this: Trump has issued

executive orders that threaten open and transparent public hearings, licensee reviews, rulemaking process. You are going to be under pressure. You are going to be under a lot of pressure, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Wright. And I appreciate the concern, Senator. I will tell you that I look forward to reading your legislation. I just heard about it this morning.

Senator Capito. Thank you. All right.

Senator Wicker?

Senator Wicker. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Commissioner Wright, I want to ask about early site permits. I expect the Grand Gulf Plant in Mississippi to decide soon to move forward on constructing a new nuclear unit. If this occurs, they might then be required to perform duplicative safety, health, and environmental assessments already done as part of the early site permit renewal, potentially costing ratepayers in my State tens of millions of dollars.

This can't be waived based on the quality of the work for the early site renewal, and if so, if you continue to serve in this office, will you commit to working with me and the White House to find a pathway to extend these permits with less burden and less cost to the customers?

Mr. Wright. Absolutely, Senator. That is just common sense. I think it is something that needs to happen, and we are

going to have to find a way for people to get through the process and get it out the door. So yes, I will work with you.

Senator Wicker. Thank you very much.

Now, let me switch to a more general topic, and that is small modular reactors, SMRs. There is a lot of talk about SMRs.

Mr. Wright. Yes.

Senator Wicker. There are very few of them actually out there. But for those listening, micro reactors offer potential benefits, including enhanced safety features, greater flexibility in deployment, and value to both civilian and national security applications.

What is the NRC doing to modernize its regulatory framework? What can you tell us about this development? Why don't we have any more of them in operation? And how soon will these become a way of life?

Mr. Wright. Well, that is a lot that you just asked about.

Senator Wicker. Well, you have got three minutes.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Wright. So, this is an area that, as I mentioned earlier, that the NRC is actually leaning in hard on and doing a great job at in the advanced reactor side of the house. We can't review anything that doesn't come before us in the form of an application.

And as I mentioned, we have five people that have been before us. One has gotten out right now, NuScale. They are out. They are done. Standard design approval, they can go to market.

The others are ahead of schedule. They are all a good news story. And we have got 25 or so that are before us in some form of early engagement. And if you saw the chart, it is like waterfall of people coming in 2026 and 2027 and 2028. And so we have got to staff up the people so that we can do those reviews and licensing actions that are going to be needed. And we are on top of that.

So the ADVANCE Act, again, thank you for that. You gave us the tools that we can go direct hire people if we need to do so. And you have given the opportunity for early movers to come in and maybe get some of their fees waived or something like that if they are the first in.

And we are working right now with DOE and with DOD to try to be part of that microreactor process.

Senator Wicker. Okay.

Mr. Wright. And to get --

Senator Wicker. Tell us about the DOD application, the national security application.

Mr. Wright. Well, I know that they have down-selected to eight microreactors. At some point, they will pick, I don't

know, a couple of them, maybe. I don't care who they pick; that is not us. We would like to be a part of the review process, so that we can work with DOE in establishing the safety case.

And the rest of it is about process after that. And we can use that data that is gathered, and building -- we need to build one. We have to get one built. And if we get one built, it is going to send a good signal to the market. It is going to help us craft a pathway for on the commercial side to get these things through the process quicker too.

So I am excited about the opportunity to work with our Federal partners on this. I think it is an opportunity that hasn't come around since probably, I don't know, Oppenheimer.

Senator Wicker. Well, sir, in terms of residential or commercial application, how many city blocks would a typical SMR power in, say, Washington, D.C.? Do you have any idea?

Mr. Wright. There are different sizes that will do different things.

Senator Wicker. There is really, there is less there than meets the eye.

Mr. Wright. Oh, yes. Yes. I mean, right now, it is like within the fence line, is where the, I don't know the critical part of it would be, right, where people would be concerned for the emergency planning --

Senator Wicker. I am talking about power generation, for

how far, how big of an area?

Mr. Wright. It would go a long way. I mean, these things are from 100 megawatts or so up to 300 megawatts or so. So depending on their use, it would be a lot.

Senator Wicker. How big of an area of this city could 300 megawatts power?

Mr. Wright. Subject to check, I don't know. Maybe 100,000, 200,000 homes or better.

Senator Wicker. Thank you. Appreciate it. Look forward to working with you. Thank you, ma'am.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Lummis just arrived. I don't know if you are extremely timely, or if you are ready.

Senator Lummis. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the nominees for coming before the committee today and thank, of course, the Chair and the Ranking Member for organizing the hearing.

I am interested in learning how our nominees plan to carry out President Trump's priorities of American energy dominance, improving tribal affairs and strengthening government-to-government relations.

Chairman Wright, thanks for your support of innovative technologies addressing the environmental challenge posed to abandoned uranium mines. What specific actions will you take to

ensure that advanced reactor developers already deep into the licensing process benefit from modernizing the NRC and not just future developers? Can you ensure that early movers like Terra Power are not disadvantaged by shifting regulatory frameworks intended to benefit future applicants?

Mr. Wright. Thank you, Senator. Again, I met with you, you were probably my second Senator maybe that I met with.

Senator Lummis. Yes, I enjoyed our conversation. Thank you.

Mr. Wright. We covered a lot of ground that day.

Senator Lummis. We did.

Mr. Wright. So one, the NRC, we are committed to all advanced reactor developers. We want to work with them regardless of their stage and the whole licensing process. We are going to make sure that these applicants, especially those that are already deep in the process, they will benefit from the modernization, not be penalized as a result of it.

So we are going to, the NRC is going to, we appreciate and recognize those significant investments that they have made, right? So we want to make sure that they get through the process efficiently and timely, and that we are not throwing up a roadblock that is unintended.

So we are going to make sure that they get through and they are not penalized.

Senator Lummis. Thank you. I would also like to follow up on a question that was asked earlier by Senator Kelly about the NRC's guidance on legacy mine cleanup.

Can you briefly speak to the commission's plans distinguishing mine waste from conventional ore? How would you ensure that service provider licensees like Disa who you previously mentioned are not burdened by unnecessary conditions that could hinder remediation or limit the recovery of recyclable uranium from these legacy waste piles?

Mr. Wright. Right. Well, commission direction has got to be followed. I mean, the service provider framework is what we have recommended be done, and that is going to be the way it is going to have to be. And outside of that, the staff is going to have to, they were working at it, and I think they got stuck on it and I don't think there has been any movement on whether or not there will be a definition or how it would look or what it would be like. I would like to get back to you on maybe how that stands at this moment.

Senator Lummis. That would be much appreciated. Yes, thank you. I will look forward to that conversation.

Mr. Wright. Yes, ma'am.

Senator Lummis. As you know, the cleanup that can be done, especially on the Navajo Reservation, I mean, it is tremendous.

Mr. Wright. It is a market-based solution to something

that can get it done today. And even if it is 80 percent, 80 percent is clean. That is cleaning it up.

Senator Lummis. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Wright. I have been a fan about it for three years now.

Senator Lummis. Thank you. I am so pleased to hear that. Let's follow up.

Mr. Wright. Yes, ma'am.

Senator Lummis. So after years of effort and hundreds of millions in public investment, the United States still doesn't have a single license operating an advanced reactor. So what, should we expect different results in the future?

Mr. Wright. Well, yes, we should. And I think we are moving in that direction in a big way. As I mentioned earlier, a couple of times, that the advanced reactor side of our house is the shining star within the NRC right now. We just got the NuScale standard design approval out so they can go to market now. And we have got others that, we have four other applications that are before us.

Until the others come in with applications, we can't really start doing the official stuff. But we have got 25 others who are in early engagement with us so that when they get the questions answered on anything new and novel, their application will be robust and complete and full and we should be able to

get through the licensing process quicker. I mean, our goal is like 18 months or so.

Senator Lummis. Duly noted. And I appreciate your response.

Do I have time to ask Ms. Turner a question? Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. Turner, welcome. The EPA currently treats the two separate federally-recognized Wyoming tribes as if they were one single tribe, as it pertains to grant funds. This creates complications, and fails to recognize the sovereignty of either tribe.

Of course, the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapahoe are the two tribes of which I am speaking, who inhabit the Wind River Reservation.

So will you commit to treating each tribe as separate entities, as intended by the laws governing the trust relationship between the Federal Government and a federally-recognized tribe?

Ms. Turner. Senator Lummis, good morning. And I appreciate that question.

I, should I be confirmed in this role, I would want to understand why these two tribal nations are potentially being treated as one. You weren't here to hear me say earlier that EPA does take its Federal trust responsibility seriously. We

work with our tribal nations as sovereign entities. Government-to-government relationship is paramount to how we engage and how we respect the sovereignties of the tribes.

So I would want to understand what is happening there, should I be confirmed in this role.

The releasing of grant money for our tribal programs is also very important. So should I be confirmed in the role, I would like to understand what is happening, work with the region, work with the grant staff that is overseeing this, and see what we can do to get that grant money taken care of.

Senator Lummis. And that is a very fair response. So I appreciate that response. Let's plan on visiting about that further as time goes on.

Ms. Turner. Absolutely.

Senator Lummis. Thank you. Thanks, Madam Chairman. I yield back.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Lummis.

So it looks as though we have come to the end. One of the little housekeeping issues that was not addressed at the beginning, I am going to address at the end. These are questions for both of you. If you would just, I will start with Chairman Wright and go across.

Number one, do you agree if confirmed to appear before this committee or designated members of this committee and other

appropriate committees of this Congress to provide information subject to appropriate and necessary security protections with respect to your responsibilities?

Mr. Wright. Yes.

Ms. Turner. Yes.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, documents and electronic and other forms of communication of information are provided to this committee and its staff and other appropriate committees in a timely fashion?

Mr. Wright. Yes.

Ms. Turner. Yes, Madam Chairman.

Senator Capito. And finally, do you know of any matters that you may or may not have disclosed that may place you in a conflict of interest if you are confirmed?

Mr. Wright. No.

Ms. Turner. No.

Senator Capito. Thank you very much for that.

I also ask unanimous consent to submit various letters of support for today's nominees, for both nominees I have letters of support. So with no objections, the letters are so submitted.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Capito. With no further questions, I would like to thank the nominees and the audience and all of my colleagues for your participation in today's hearing.

Senators who wish to submit written questions for the record have until 5:00 p.m. Monday June 30th to do so. The nominees' responses to those questions are due back to the committee no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, July the 7th. I expect that you will be working on those July 4th as you are viewing the fireworks, and they will be submitted for the record.

So with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:28 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]