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Committee on Environment
and Public Works

Washington, D.C.

HEARING ON THE NOMINATIONS OF LEE BEAMAN TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY AND DOUGLAS WEAVER TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m. in room 562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Honorable Shelley Moore Capito [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Senators Capito, Whitehouse, Lummis, Sullivan, Merkley, Markey, Padilla, Schiff, Alsobrooks.

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

Senator Capito. Calling this hearing to order, and good morning, and I thank everybody for being here.

Today, we will consider the nominations of Douglas Weaver to serve as a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and Lee Beaman to be a member of the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors. First, we will hear from Mr. Weaver.

This is the third NRC nomination hearing since June, and the fifth NRC nominee to come before the EPW committee in the last 18 months. Confirming Mr. Weaver to the NRC will return the Commission to its full complement of five members as Congress had designed.

A full slate of commissioners is best suited for the agency to carry out its business to the full extent of the law and make important and necessary decision on the future of nuclear power generation in the United States. These decisions include selecting experienced, key, permanent career leaders to fill NRC's most important positions and approving an updated organizational structure to more efficiently fulfill its obligations.

Selecting highly qualified leaders and modernizing its organizational structure will enable the Commission and its staff to fully confront the challenging and vital work that is

expected and needed at the NRC. The NRC fills a crucial position in delivering on a shared bipartisan agenda to deploy more nuclear energy and to do so quickly and safely.

To deliver on this agenda, the Commission must implement its statutory obligations, including those in the ADVANCE Act, respond to President Trump's executive orders, and accomplish this while continuing to efficiently carrying out its licensing duties.

The role of nuclear technology in our energy future will be set by the actions taken by the NRC today. These actions must not be compromised, either procedurally or substantively, by taking shortcuts, or undercutting the NRC's principles of good regulation.

Because of the consequential impacts of NRC's ongoing work, the Commission must ensure the agency's decisions are clear, workable and enduring. Doug Weaver's comprehensive expertise with nuclear technology provides him with a perspective to effectively met this challenge.

Mr. Weaver began his career in the Navy, serving for nine years in active duty in the Nuclear Navy, and then 12 years in the Naval Reserve. During his time serving our Country, he has received multiple medals in recognition of his service and assisted in our Nation's response to the 9/11 attacks at the Pentagon.

After leaving active duty, Mr. Weaver spent nearly 20 years as an NRC staffer, including as Deputy Chief of Staff for Chairman Dale Klein. He departed the NRC to work for leading nuclear supply chain companies, and was directly involved in regulatory compliance as an NRC licensee.

I believe Doug Weaver's service in the Nuclear Navy, experience as an NRC staff member and work in the private sector make him well rounded and well qualified to be confirmed as an NRC commissioner. I will say, as a point of personal privilege, his in-laws are my constituents and very good friends. So, there is that.

Senator Whitehouse. There is that.

[Laughter.]

Senator Capito. We will also consider the nomination to fill a vacancy on the TVA Board of Directors. In 1933, Congress passed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act to establish the TVA as a federally-owned public utility to serve the people of the Tennessee Valley across seven southeastern States. The law charges TVA with three primary roles: providing electricity, managing the Tennessee River system, and assisting with economic development efforts.

Recently, this committee favorably reported four nominees to be members of the TVA Board of Directors. Once confirmed, those four nominees will provide the Board with the required

quorum to conduct all business necessary for the TVA to fully function. The current nominee, Mr. Beaman, would bring considerable expertise in business operations to the Board. Mr. Beaman sold his successful automotive group in 2020, and now serves as chairman and CEO of Beaman Ventures. If confirmed, he must support and uphold each of these three fundamental responsibilities at TVA, which has served the people of the Tennessee Valley very well for decades.

With that, I will now recognize Ranking Member Whitehouse, and then I will introduce my fellow Senators for their introductions.

[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. Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

With respect to Mr. Weaver, he has been nominated to fill the last vacancy on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. This seat had been occupied by former Commissioner Annie Caputo, who resigned in August. I cannot help but wonder if her resignation was influenced by the Department of Energy and DOGE, as I describe it, interference at NRC, and the ensuing turmoil.

This is the third hearing for an NRC nominee this year, and the second hearing to fill an NRC slot that was prematurely vacated. I will repeat the warning that I relayed to Chairman Wright and now-Commissioner Nieh. The Trump administration's assault on NRC's independence threatens the stability and reputation of the agency. That threatens the viability of the U.S. nuclear industry.

Our nuclear industry's success depends upon the credibility of its regulators. That credibility is clearly in jeopardy, as I have pointed out in all of these nominations.

In March, 1975, NRC's first chairman, Bill Anders, testified before the Senate Joint Committee on Atomic Energy that, and I am quoting him here, "Public confidence will follow only if our performance both serves and is perceived to serve the public interest and is not prejudiced either for or against

the industry we regulate." Instead, the Department of Energy has intruded across the NRC's Congressionally-mandated separation from DOE and DOGE has inserted at NRC 10 unqualified DOGE staffers.

In the name of transformation, these DOGEs have pushed out nuclear experts and directed the NRC to rip up and revise its regulations in a dangerously short time frame. That supposed transformation has only sewn turmoil. It begs the question: who is behind the rush to a wholesale revision of regulations within the nine months? Who benefits?

NRC lost scores of senior executives and technical staffers who might have defended against mischief lurking in such a change. And the revision is being jammed through without transparency or consultation under the Trump OIRA's new Black Box process. And it is led by a so-called acting general counsel who lacks any nuclear energy experience.

That is a dangerous combination, kneecapping the Nation's safety regulator at a time of unprecedented interest in cutting edge nuclear technologies, it is shortsighted and irresponsible and begs the question again, what is behind this, or who is behind this? Why is the administration evading NRC's licensing process by rushing appropriations through the Department of Energy or the Department of Defense without the expertise or the capacity to handle such reviews?

If you think the winner here is the nuclear industry, you are wrong. Industry will pay the price of regulatory uncertainty. Industry will pay the price of errors from rushed reviews. Industry will pay the price of undermined confidence in nuclear safety. And God forbid, we will all pay the price if something goes seriously wrong. We will all pay the price of losing out on a zero-emissions energy source while we face growing climate and energy crises.

Mr. Weaver has, on paper, the technical qualifications for the job. He served two decades at the NRC and worked in the nuclear industry. My question for him is whether he will have the backbone, the courage, at the NRC to choose safety over pressure from the Department of Energy as it engages in a bureaucratic capture effort, or DOGE, as it does its Thing 1 and Thing 2 general destruction of government operations, or the administration or political forces directing the administration.

I hope he will. And I hope that I will be in a position after this to vote for him as I voted for Mr. Nieh.

Turning now to Mr. Beaman. The Trump administration violated decades of bipartisanship at the Tennessee Valley Authority, firing all three Democratic board members. My Republican colleagues are evidently okay with that. Mr. Beaman's prime qualifications are that he is a Trump loyalist and 2020 election denier. He even signed a letter urging State

legislators to appoint fake electors to the electoral college to overturn the election. He has a freedom award from the Koch-backed Americans for Prosperity, a battleship of the fossil fuel influence armada.

When the ask comes to raise TVA customers' rates by backing away from less expensive clean energy, to keep more expensive fossil fuel plants running, it is a pretty safe bet whose back he will have. He is the landlord to multiple Republican members of Congress at his Capitol Hill row home, and the campaign treasurer for one whose misrepresentations on financial disclosures and reports are now pending review by the House Ethics Committee.

The non-partisan Office of Congressional Ethics found evidence of wrongdoing but despite OCE's recommendation to subpoena witnesses, the investigation has been stalled since another of Beaman's tenants, Mike Johnson, became Speaker of the House. We will see if my Republican colleagues are okay with that, too.

Bipartisanship at the TVA had long been a bipartisan Senate thing, until the Senate rolled over for the Trump administration. Competence at the NRC had long been a bipartisan Senate thing, until the Senate rolled over for DOE and DOGE interference and whatever corrupt mess is behind that interference.

In any normal Senate, it would be a bipartisan Senate thing to hold the nomination of someone involved as campaign treasurer in a House Ethics investigation until the investigation was concluded.

Finally, there are personal issues that are laid out in a variety of articles that I ask be put into the record, so that the Senate is fully aware of the candidate's background.

I think voters just sent a pretty strong message about following the Trump administration off the corruption cliff, and I hope Senators on both sides think twice about continually tearing down our own institution.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The prepared statement of Senator Whitehouse and the referenced information follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse.

So we will now turn to the introductions of the nominees I am pleased to have my fellow Senator, Senator McCormick, from Pennsylvania, to introduce Doug Weaver, nominated to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, NRC. Senator McCormick, welcome to the committee.

Senator McCormick. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair, Ranking Member Whitehouse and members of the committee. It is my great pleasure to introduce Douglas Weaver to the committee as you consider his nomination to be a member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Mr. Weaver is a proud native of Shamokin, which is about 20 miles down the road from where I grew up, in Bloomsburg, and he has an incredible career of public service, a professional career, advancing safe nuclear energy. Here with him today is his wife, Meg, and their two sons, Seth and Matthew, as well as a third son, J.D., who is participating by livestream. And his mother, brother, and two sisters at their home in Shamokin. So welcome, all.

Mr. Weaver's record of public service is second to none, as you said, Madam Chair. He served in the United States Navy on active duty for five years. During his active duty, he worked in a nuclear training prototype as a nuclear prototype training officer and as a division officer on board the USS Louisville.

He also supervised preparing students to operate a Navy nuclear population plant. And during his 13 years as a Naval Reserve officer, Mr. Weaver helped to rebuild the Navy command operations center following the September 11th attacks. For his service, he was awarded the Navy commendation medal.

For nearly two decades, Mr. Weaver served at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, including serving as deputy director of the Spent Fuel Storage and Transportation Division. Later, he was the vice president of Licensing and Regulatory Affgairs at Holtec International, and as vice president of Nuclear Regulatory Affairs at Westinghouse Electric Company, another Pennsylvania icon. Most recently, he served as the president of Atomic Safety.

His extensive resume and professional experience have prepared him very well to serve on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The commission is charged with enabling the safe and secure use and deployment of civilian nuclear energy technologies and radioactive materials. In our home State of Pennsylvania, we are blessed with four active nuclear power plants, and a fifth that is expected to come online in 2027.

Pennsylvania nuclear power powers 7.3 million homes, employs 3,300 individuals, and is responsible for almost a third of the State's electricity generation. Our Country is witnessing a profound change, a demand for safe, clean, and

reliable power to power the great American comeback. Nuclear power, whether from a traditional generation plant or small modular reactor, will be key, an absolute necessity for meeting these demands. And ensuring the safety and security of these facilities will be one of Mr. Weaver's top duties which he is supremely, supremely qualified for. He has the operational regulatory and policy experience that this very unique and very important position demands.

I can think of no one, no one more qualified to serve on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission than Douglas Weaver. It is my honor to introduce him to this committee today.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator.

Next, I will turn to Senator Blackburn, who is here to introduce Lee Beaman, nominated to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Welcome, Senator Blackburn. You are recognized.

Senator Blackburn. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and it is indeed an honor for me to stand with Lee Beaman and to support his nomination and confirmation to the Board of Directors for the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Now, every once in a while, as we look at these boards, we have people who are so well qualified, that have such a thorough understanding of the issues for an agency, and it is an honor to

have them offer themselves for service. And that indeed is Mr. Beaman. He brings decades of experience in business leadership, community service, and organizational governance with him to fill this role at the TVA.

His career actually began as a teenager when he was washing cars at the auto dealership, and then over the course of more than 54 years, he built a career that led him to serve as the owner, the CEO, and chairman of the board for nine automobile dealerships representing 13 franchises across two States.

He is not only a prominent figure in the auto industry; his leadership has extended to the beverage industry, where he spent 35 years working across Tennessee and Georgia. The regions served by these companies that he has led overlap closely with areas that TVA supports, giving him first-hand familiarity with the communities, the people, the economic conditions and the operational needs of this region.

Mr. Beaman's service record is far beyond the private sector. For more than four decades, he has served on the boards of many notable Tennessee institutions, including Vanderbilt Children's Hospital, Belmont University, the Nashville Symphony, and the Beacon Center of Tennessee. His commitment to his community, to his church, has been recognized with honors, such as the National American Business Ethics Award and multiple recognitions from businesses and charitable organizations across

our State.

Mr. Beaman, his wife, Julie, and their family have also demonstrated a longstanding commitment to giving back financially to causes that support Tennesseans, and make their lives and our communities better. These have included contributions and funding for the Beaman NICU at St. Thomas Midtown Hospital. This is something that meets the needs of so many young parents in our neighborhood.

His philanthropic endeavors include the Beaman Family Foundation, which supports dozens of charitable causes and the donation of 1,500 acres of land to the city of Nashville for a park.

With his leadership and commitment to the people of our great State, I am so confident that Mr. Beaman will lead with discipline and an unwavering commitment to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors, to the people that are served by the TVA, and to meeting President Trump's goal of making energy plentiful and affordable and available for economic growth and development.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator Capito. I want to thank you, Senator Blackburn. We are expecting Senator Hagerty, but he has not arrived yet. So what we will do is bring the witnesses forward, and I will swear you all in, and we will begin statements, and then come

back to Senator Hagerty when he arrives.

Thank you, Senator Blackburn.

Before you all are seated, I would like to, if you would please stand and raise your right hand and answer the following questions. Do you swear the testimony you are about to give to the committee is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God? Mr. Weaver?

Mr. Weaver. Yes.

Senator Capito. Mr. Beaman?

Mr. Beaman. Yes, I do.

Senator Capito. Let the record show that the witnesses have answered in the affirmative. So we will now hear from the nominees. So you can be seated.

We will first go to, since Senator Hagerty is here in the nick of time, we will go ahead and let him do his introduction.

Welcome, Senator Hagerty. I know it is a busy day here. So we appreciate your being here.

Senator Hagerty. Thank you, Chairman Capito, and Ranking Member Whitehouse. My apologies for sliding in late. I was just doing an introduction for another friend and former staffer in another committee hearing. But it is a great honor to be with you today for this important hearing.

I just want to let you know, it is a great honor for me to introduce a good friend of mine, Lee Beaman.

My home State of Tennessee depends on strong leadership to ensure that the Tennessee Valley continues to grow, thrive and remain competitive for future generations. TVA plays a vital role in that mission, and the individuals who serve on its board must bring both experience and a deep commitment to the people of the valley.

It is my honor to introduce an exceptional Tennessean, Lee Beaman, President Trump's nominee to serve on the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Mr. Beaman's career spans decades of successful entrepreneurship and executive management. As the head of one Tennessee's most well-known private companies he consistently demonstrated strong leadership, operational experience, and a commitment to long-term strategic planning.

His background navigating complex challenge and guiding large organizations makes him well prepared to contribute meaningfully to TVA's mission. Equally important is Mr. Beaman's longstanding dedication to civic and community service. He has been deeply involved in advancing educational opportunities, strengthening local organizations, and supporting initiatives that improve quality of life throughout our region.

His perspective reflects someone who understands not only how to build strong businesses, but how to support the communities that they serve. The work of TVA is essential to

the future of the Tennessee Valley, ensuring reliable power, supporting economic development, and preparing the region for new industries and new opportunities. TVA needs board members who can balance sound governance with practical, real-world experience.

Lee Beaman brings this much-needed mix of skills. His leadership background, his business acumen, and his commitment to Tennessee make Lee an exceptional well-equipped candidate to guide TVA's long-term goals.

I am confident that Lee will bring steady, thoughtful and effective leadership to the Board. He understands the responsibility of this role, and he is prepared to help TVA continue its mission of supporting the valley's growth, resilience and prosperity for generations to come.

I am pleased to support President Trump's nomination and I thank the committee in advance for your votes today to secure Lee's swift confirmation.

Thank you.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senato Hagerty. We appreciate that.

So, we will now go to our opening statements. Mr. Weaver, you are up first. So we will please proceed with your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS WEAVER, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Mr. Weaver. Thank you, Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse and members of this committee for the opportunity to discuss how my years of nuclear experience can help the Nuclear Regulatory Commission meet this moment. I also want to thank President Trump for nominating me, and also for the kind words and introduction by Senator McCormick.

I want to recognize my family, my wife Meg whose unwavering love and support make this possible, my three sons, Seth and Matthew who are here with me today, and J.D. who is following from Case Western Reserve University, and my mother Frances, at home in Pennsylvania, whose faith at age 92 continues to inspire me.

Today I am reminded of the first time I came to Washington seeking approval for a new role. Just after I completed my sophomore year of college, I came here to interview with the late Admiral McKee to serve as an officer in the Navy's nuclear power program. That turned out to be day one of what would become 29 years of combined military and Federal civilian service, including 20 years at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Coming before the Committee today brings me full circle and, if confirmed, presents one more opportunity to serve our

great Nation.

My career has had three distinct phases. First, my initial training and operating experience in the Navy, where I learned the fundamentals of nuclear power and what it means to safely operate and maintain a reactor.

Second, at the NRC where I trained to be a nuclear safety regulator, how to apply the regulatory framework in various situations, and ultimately the policy setting process when I served as an advisor to former NRC Chairman Klein.

Third was my work in the private sector. After I left Federal service, I ultimately led the global regulatory affairs organization for Westinghouse Electric Company. I sit before you with a lifetime of nuclear safety experience that provides a solid foundation to serve on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Since leaving the NRC 13 years ago, I have worked in the private sector as a leader and advisor assisting companies navigating the NRC's regulatory landscape for both reactors and fuel cycle facilities. Looking at the NRC from the perspective of an applicant and licensee has given me a clear understanding of the challenges faced by the industry when seeking NRC approvals.

At a time when America seeks energy independence and climate solutions, nuclear technology stands at a critical juncture. While the NRC's safety record is exemplary, in

today's rapidly evolving energy landscape the NRC must match safety excellence with regulatory agility. While NRC must act more expeditiously, speed cannot come at the cost of compromising safety. Safety must remain the NRC's top priority, but it must be achieved in a more efficient manner, for example, by placing a greater emphasis on risk-informed decision-making.

The NRC is already changing for the better, as I have seen in my interactions with the NRC staff in the year prior to my nomination. If confirmed, I will work with the current members of the Commission to continue to effectively implement both the ADVANCE Act and Executive Order 14300 in a manner that maintains public trust and meets the needs of the Nation.

I commit to leveraging my nuclear safety experience to help build an NRC that is both uncompromisingly safety-focused and strategically efficient. The American people deserve nothing less than excellence in nuclear regulation.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weaver follows:]

Senator Capito. Thank you, Mr. Weaver. I would like to extend my warm welcome to the family, your family, good-looking family back there, Meg and your two sons and your one son who is listening, and your mother. I am throwing the McKinneys in there as well.

Mr. Beaman, we welcome your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF LEE BEAMAN, NOMINATED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Mr. Beaman. Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and members of the committee, thank you for having me this morning and for the opportunity to discuss my nomination to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors. I am honored by the opportunity to serve my State and region and appreciate the nomination by President Trump, and Senators Hagerty and Blackburn for their support.

I am also thankful to my wife, Julie, who is here with our pastor, Steve Berger. Julie suggested that I serve in this capacity. She stressed to me the crucial need for greater electric power in our region and our Country, and that TVA can play a vital role, even leading the way for our Nation.

I never served in the military, something I deeply regret. However, I now have experience, knowledge, and wisdom that I can apply at TVA and serve my Country.

I have spent my career building businesses, and it all started as a teenager washing cars. More than 54 years later, I was the owner, CEO, and chairman of the board for 9 dealerships, operating under 13 different franchises and brands in two States with sales and distribution across eight States east of the Mississippi River.

My career also includes 35 years in the beverage industry,

Pepsi and Seven-Up, encompassing 15 products in over 100 package sizes, distributed across parts of Tennessee and Georgia. The automobile and beverage industries have taken me across much of the same region that TVA serves.

For over four decades, I have had the privilege of serving my community on the boards of some of Tennessee's most respected institutions, spanning healthcare, education, the arts, civil rights, and economic development. From Vanderbilt Children's Hospital to Belmont University to the Nashville Symphony and the Beacon Center of Tennessee, I have worked alongside dedicated leaders to advance missions that matter.

Whether chairing strategic initiatives or guiding long-term vision, I bring a deep understanding of governance and a passion for building organizations that serve with excellence. My commitment to ethical leadership and community service has been recognized with awards such as the National American Business Ethics Award, the Junior Achievement Free Enterprise Award. And I have also been humbled to receive distinctions like the Charlie Daniels Patriot Award, and inclusion in multiple years in the Nashville Business Journal's Top 100 Most Powerful People.

In addition to my time, I have also given financially to many worthy causes, such as The Beaman NICU at St. Thomas Midtown Hospital, which helps protect the most vulnerable among

us. My community service and the honors I have received reflect not just a personal journey, but also a lifelong dedication to advancing organizations that serve with purpose, vision, and heart. I am grateful for the chance to bring that same energy and experience to this board.

My career has been about far more than building a business. It has been about making a positive impact where my family and I work and live. By dedicating time and resources to causes we care about, we are making a meaningful difference in others' lives.

For example, to fulfill our commitment to conservation, we donated 1,500 acres of beautiful, pristine land to the city of Nashville so that future generations can enjoy hiking miles of trails on this preserved land within city limits.

Since childhood, I have enjoyed Tennessee's beautiful natural environment, from hiking in the Smokies and the Cumberland Mountains to kayaking and fishing on many TVA lakes. Just this year, my wife, Julie, and I chose to celebrate our anniversary hiking in the Smokies.

While serving as a TVA board member, I would take the opportunity to play a serious role in protecting the environment. I am a proud Tennessean and American, and if confirmed, I am committed to serving my State and Country by carrying out TVA's mission to improve lives while making a

positive difference in energy, the environment, and economic development of our region.

If confirmed, I will push for performance to ensure affordable and reliable power is delivered to the local power companies and businesses across the seven-State region, and I will drive efforts to secure America's energy future.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Beaman follows:]

Senator Capito. All right, thank you both. Before we go to the -- well, I will begin the questioning. But I am going to ask three standard questions that I ask of our witnesses.

So, I will just go down the line here. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear before the committee, designated members of the committee and other appropriate committees of the Congress to provide information, subject to appropriate and necessary security protections, with respect to your responsibilities?

Mr. Weaver. I do.

Mr. Beaman. I do.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Do you agree to ensure that testimony, briefings, documents and electronic and other forms of communication are provided to the committee, its staff, and others in an appropriate and timely manner?

Mr. Weaver. I do.

Mr. Beaman. Yes, I do.

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

Mr. Weaver. No.

Mr. Beaman. I do not.

Senator Capito. Thank you. And now I will begin.

I am going to start with you, Mr. Weaver. You know the

NRC's budget very well. And the NRC, in testimonies in front of this committee, has had a long record of misallocating their budget resources. I have frequently expressed my frustrations with that, the development, management and execution process. This has resulted in excessive fees paid by the nuclear industry and delays in the agency's core licensing duties.

During your time for then-NRC Chair Klein, you had first-hand experience with the budget process, as I mentioned earlier. So, based on your experience, what are the most important steps that the NRC could take to improve how the budget is developed, managed and executed?

Mr. Weaver. Thank you for the question, Senator. I have to say, the NRC budget has vexed me, both when I worked there, and as a member of industry trying to get clarity on some things. So I think one of the first things is, when the commissioners vote on the budget, that may be their biggest policy decision they make, because it is setting priorities for an entire year.

And I found it, when I was working for Chairman Klein, difficult to advise him because of the lack of clarity in the information that was provided even to the commission. So as I think of, and I have had a lot of chance to think about that since, and maybe it is easiest to describe just an example.

The NRC, as you know, collects most of its budget through

fees, hourly fees as well as annual fees. Looked at holistically, about 25 percent of the budget comes from, the fee recoverable budget comes from hourly fees. And I think the staff has done a pretty good job being accountable for those, because those get billed to licensees, and they can see their bills and you might like it or not like it, but it is clear.

I think the opportunity in budgeting is in that 75 percent that is covered by annual fees. There is a lot less clarity about the staff's plans on what they intend to accomplish with that 75 percent. And as you indicated in your question, that can lead to higher annual fees.

The other downside of that is the staffs sometimes starts efforts that kind of snowball, spend a lot of resources, a lot of their time, spend a lot of industry time on something that ultimately doesn't have a safety benefit.

So my solution would be increased transparency during budget formulation inside the NRC and when we are in budget execution, to have external transparency. What did we say we were going to do; did we do it? And just march down.

And I think if we provide the commission with that sort of clarity, the commission then can decide, no, hey, licensing is my biggest priority right now. I see this lower priority item, I am going to move some resource over there.

So that is a short version, Senator.

Senator Capito. Thank you. Thank you. You obviously know the process well. And I think transparency is always a great key. It is harder to achieve than sometimes it sounds like.

Mr. Beaman, TVA is one of the leaders in American nuclear, producing nearly 40 percent of its generation from nuclear power. TVA holds the early site permit from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to build a small modular reactors, or an SMR, at its Clinch River site. This would be the first SMR at a utility in the United States.

What role do you see for nuclear energy, including advanced nuclear reactors, in TVA's power generation portfolio?

Mr. Beaman. Thank you. I think nuclear power generation is the main future of power in the United States, and probably around the world. I think that TVA can lead the way as a template for the rest of the Country on how we aggressively achieve that through clean nuclear power.

Senator Capito. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Weaver, there has been an exodus of senior leadership, I think the Ranking Member talked about this, of positions that are critically important to the NRC. The chairman selects with the approval of the commission certain designated senior agency leaders.

Would you please describe the key attributes and qualifications that you would prioritize as you are considering

individuals for senior leadership positions?

Mr. Weaver. Yes, Senator, thank you for that question.

I think number one, we need leaders who are going to motivate and inspire. The staff, I think, is feeling pretty low right now due to the workload and the number of exits. So I think number one is we need leadership to inspire and motivate.

The leaders also must be committed to making independent regulatory decisions. That is a non-negotiable. Two other must-haves, they must be technically competent, they must understand the regulatory framework, we call that all one. And then finally I would say they need to be committed to implementing the ADVANCE Act, as well as the Executive Order 14300.

Senator Capito. I know with the passage of the ADVANCE Act, they have been sort of pirated away to private industry to help them fulfill the SMRs and the dream of the next technologies. So we will help, try to help work with you and the commission to try to get the best, highly-qualified leaders in senior positions.

Senator Whitehouse?

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Weaver, thank you very much for the meeting that we had in my office. I found it very helpful. In that meeting, I mentioned four separate threats to the NRC's capability and

independence. One is direct political interference and influence by the White House, which would give potential big nuclear developers a way to speed around traditional safety reviews, if the NRC yielded to that influence.

The second is the erosion of the firewall between the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which was the very basis for the founding of the NRC. I see what looks like a very distinct old-fashioned bureaucratic turf power grab by the Department of Energy to try to intrude into and to some degree even take over the NRC.

The third is the brain drain that both the Chairman and I have mentioned, as the staff exodus has taken place. And the fourth is the intrusion of people who seem to have much more loyalty to the fossil fuel industry than to the nuclear industry, and may be in a position to handicap the development of nuclear power, because every nuclear electron that comes online likely displaces a fossil fuel electron. We have seen that already take place in my State, with an offshore wind project.

So those are four, I think, very real risks that you face. Tell me how you would respond to those risks as an NRC commissioner.

Mr. Weaver. Thank you, Senator, and thank you for taking the time to meet with me within the past few weeks.

I am committed to having the NRC make independent regulatory decisions. I am not seeking to come back to the NRC to tear down the organization that has done so much for me. As I mentioned in response to Chairman Capito's question, I will select staff who also believe that having independence is a key part of their function, period. This is a non-negotiable.

You mentioned in your opening statement that it is short-sighted, my word, to take shortcuts on safety, because ultimately it will cause failure in the industry. I believe that nuclear power is a good thing for the United States if it is done safely. It helps make our Country stronger and cleaner. But it has to be done safely.

Senator Whitehouse. Will you also take a good, hard look at the ongoing regulatory revisions which are happening without real transparency in the context of a brain drain where much of the internal capability of reviewing those revisions is lost, and at the hands of people who may have mischievous interests?

I think that they merit a good, close look. Will you promise me to give that a good, close look once you get there?

Mr. Weaver. Yes, Senator, absolutely. These rulemakings will be complex, and it is the first thing that is on my mind, other than hiring permanent staff in leadership positions, is looking at those rulemakings.

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you.

Mr. Beaman, the Office of Congressional Ethics found, and I quote them, "substantial reason to believe that Representative Andy Ogles' campaign accepted illegally large donations and then falsely reported them as personal funds from Ogles." Ogles is your tenant, correct? And you were his campaign manager from April 2022 to August of 2022?

Mr. Beaman. No, I was his campaign treasurer for four months.

Senator Whitehouse. From April of 2022 to August of 2022, during the period of that campaign?

Mr. Beaman. That is about right.

Senator Whitehouse. Okay. I don't have time now, but I am going to ask two questions for the record on this. Do you promise to answer them fully and truthfully?

Mr. Beaman. Sure.

Senator Whitehouse. You also have another reported tenant at your home, a pastor named Steve Berger, is that correct?

Mr. Beaman. Yes.

Senator Whitehouse. And is he here with you today?

Mr. Beaman. He is.

Senator Whitehouse. He has evidently stated about LGBT individuals, or the gay community, that he would, and I am offering a quote here, "take a baseball bat and beat the hell out of every single one of them."

Mr. Beaman. I have never heard him say that.

Senator Whitehouse. What is your response to that?

Mr. Beaman. I have never heard him say that.

Senator Whitehouse. You have never heard him say that; are you aware that he said that?

Mr. Beaman. I was not, until I read that in briefings for this meeting.

Senator Whitehouse. Okay. What is your view with respect to, what is his role? Why is he here? Why is he your tenant? Are you prepared to distance yourself from views of that sort of a disgracefully violent nature?

Mr. Beaman. He is my pastor. He married my wife and me. He has been a friend of mine for many, many years. And I have never heard him express those type sentiments, other than loving every member of the community and all God's children.

Senator Whitehouse. Madam Chair, I have a letter in opposition to Mr. Beaman's nomination from Congressman Steve Cohen. I would like to ask that that be added to the record, as well as the articles.

Senator Capito. Without objection.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Whitehouse. Thank you.

Senator Merkley?

Senator Merkley. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

A couple of our senators wrote an article about TVA, saying that the Board looks more like a collection of political operatives than industrial leaders, and saying we need folks who have experience and gravitas to meet the challenge. My impression from the introductions, Mr. Beaman, is that while you bring business experience, you don't necessarily bring energy-related business experience. I will review the record again.

But what you do bring is a whole lot of what normally is characterized as being a political operative. And I will submit an article for the record from the Chattanooga Times.

Senator Capito. Without objection.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Merkley. Thank you very much. It notes you funded massively PACs that supported President Trump, PACs that supported one of our, well, almost half a million dollars for various Senate candidates, I will put it that way, that you own a home through a subsidiary in which the Speaker of the House lives, that you have advocated for some of the President's favorite projects, like putting his face on Mount Rushmore.

If any of that is incorrect, can you submit a statement to the record saying that that is not accurate?

Mr. Beaman. Senator, yes, I appreciate your question and your concern.

Senator Merkley. I don't want you to take time. I just want to know if you will submit a statement to the record if any of that is inaccurate, because we will read back through that.

Mr. Beaman. Much of that is inaccurate.

Senator Merkley. Okay, thank you. You will clarify that for us, then?

Mr. Beaman. Happy to.

Senator Merkley. Okay, great. Second is , energy is involved very much in the AI revolution because of the demands. You have a lot of stock in AI related firms like Meta, Apple, Google, and Invidia. Will you fully disclose to the committee the ownership of those stocks and will you divest them if you are confirmed to this position?

Mr. Beaman. Senator, yes, I have already disclosed all of my holdings and assets and have already signed an agreement stating that I will divest myself of all the assets that have been recommended that I do.

Senator Merkley. Well, specifically I am asking a very simple question: will you divest those specific stocks that I listed?

Mr. Beaman. Yes, I will.

Senator Merkley. Thank you very much.

There was a case related, a class action case related to your auto dealership regarding discriminatory auto lending practices. Will you fully disclose to the committee all the details of the settlement that ensued from that discriminatory auto lending practice suit?

Mr. Beaman. I will be happy to.

Senator Merkley. Thank you very much.

The elections law says that a treasurer is responsible for registering the committee, depositing receipts, authorizing expenditures, and signing and filing all reports and statements on time. This takes us to the question of the filing of the statement for Andy Ogles. Did you sign that statement?

Mr. Beaman. I do not think I did. Because I don't think it was filed at the time that I was the treasurer.

Senator Merkley. We will explore that, because it is my

understanding that it was filed while you were treasurer. If that is not the case, that is helpful to know that.

The factor that was particularly highlighted is that report was not signed by the treasurer, I thought you were treasurer at that time, we will double check that, but second of all, it involved a fake loan, which has been highlighted by a report by the Ethics Commission. And the fake loan was a very unusual situation of reporting a loan in order to intimidate fellow challengers in a primary, when the loan was not actually made.

When did you first become award that that tactic had been filed by him?

Mr. Beaman. I heard about that in the news media months afterwards.

Senator Merkley. And that did not happen while you were treasurer?

Mr. Beaman. To my knowledge it did not.

Senator Merkley. Thank you for clarifying that. We will check those details.

I wanted to turn then to, I was disturbed, I will just put it that way, by a series of points that were made that are rather personal. And one that, this is from your divorce filing, I really hesitate to ask you about them here. So I think I will just pursue them separately. The allegations made during that were disturbing to me, I will just put it that way.

And with that, my time is up. Thank you.

Senator Capito. Senator Padilla?

Senator Padilla. Thank you, Madam Chair.

May I remind my colleagues of a question and concern I have raised repeatedly with all the nominees to serve on the NRC that have come before this committee, going back years now, specifically speaking to the independence of the Commission, and more recently, the potential presence and influence of Department of Energy detailees, or former DOGE employees. The concern being that their presence at the NRC threatens the very independence of the Commission that is so critical, not just from a government standpoint, but from the standpoint, the point of view of even the trust of the American people and the public confidence in the Commission and its work.

So I am going to ask Mr. Weaver a question I have asked of every commissioner that has come through, and that is, do you commit, Mr. Weaver, to ensuring that any outside staffers from any other government entity, even if they are labeled as Department of Energy detailees, do not dictate the policy to NRC staff or have veto power over NRC staff? Yes or no?

Mr. Weaver. Yes, Senator, absolutely.

Senator Padilla. Thank you. I appreciate the clarity of your answer. I wish every nominee that comes before us was that succinct.

Do you support the separation of nuclear safety from nuclear promotion responsibilities between the NRC and the Department of Energy? Yes or no.

Mr. Weaver. Yes.

Senator Padilla. Thank you. And do you agree that NRC staff have unique and critical expertise and experience necessary to license new reactors as compared to the expertise contained in the Department of Energy or the Department of Defense?

Mr. Weaver. I can't be quite as easy on this one. So, yes to the first part, clearly, the NRC has that expertise. I don't know what expertise or the number of people that do that kind of work at DOE or DOD.

Senator Padilla. That is fair, and I appreciate the honesty. That will be a subject we will continue to discuss in the future.

Let me also ask you a question, we covered this in my office when you were kind enough to come in, so you know my concern about staffing levels and capacity of the staff at the Commission. The work that is done there is obviously critical to ensuring that nuclear reactors are safe, secure, and up to regulatory standards.

From my view, representing a State that has a long history with nuclear power plants, including the still-functioning

Diablo Canyon, I feel the work of the NRC is being threatened by a loss in personnel, whether it is retirements, whether it is sort of forced retirements, whether it is DOGE cuts, et cetera. And it is not just a loss of experience and expertise, but the impact on morale of the staff that remains.

Mr. Weaver, if confirmed, do you commit to pushing back on further reductions or even advocating for the reversal of past reductions if they threaten the NRC's ability to maintain the safety of our nuclear facilities?

Mr. Weaver. Senator, if staffing is an issue to maintain safety, then I will definitely speak up and seek to hire more people. Not being there, I am not quite sure, I am aware that people have left, I don't know what the actual conditions are. But it is going to be one of my first orders of business. Earlier I testified that selecting leaders who can inspire and motivate the staff, because of the morale issues that you just pointed out, Senator, is a high priority of mine.

Senator Padilla. Thank you. That is all I am looking for, is someone who is willing to make the commitment and has the courage to speak up if staffing levels get to that point. That should concern not just members of the Commission, but members of this committee, members of the Senate, members of Congress, and of course, the general public.

In the time left, I want to ask a question that again, I

ask all the commissioners representing California, we are no strangers to earthquakes, especially large earthquakes. Seismic safety has been and continues to be a priority for me.

Mr. Weaver, if confirmed, to you commit to ensuring that the NRC continues to evaluate seismic risk at nuclear facilities, and that it updates regularly its assessments with the most up-to-date and relevant seismic risk data and tools available?

Mr. Weaver. Yes.

Senator Padilla. Thank you very much. I appreciate your clarity.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Markey?

Senator Markey. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Weaver, I appreciated our conversation and your support for NRC's safety mission and independence. Unfortunately, the NRC's independence is under attack by DOGE and the Trump White House which is now requiring that the NRC send along its actions and decisions to the White House for alignment with President Trump's agenda before they get published, with the White House getting the final say on those safety regulations.

Mr. Weaver, if you were told to make changes that you thought made an NRC decision less protective of public safety,

would you refuse even if that meant you might get fired?

Mr. Weaver. Senator, I am not completely clear what the new process is. I am aware that there is a process. I am going to do what I think is safe, without regard to my status as a commissioner, period.

Senator Markey. Well, I hope that our new commissioners won't be tested in that way. But this is not a hypothetical. Trump already fired an independent NRC chair for not falling in line with his political agenda. And this chilling effect has not gone away. The NRC's independence keeps us safe, and is the engine behind public trust in a nuclear industry. Without that independence, we risk a meltdown in more ways than one.

TVA is our Nation's sixth largest power supplier and largest public power utility. Its board is responsible for developing the utility's long-range plans, approving its annual budget and setting electricity rates, along with other duties.

So let's get to one important management question. In a recent interview with the Nashville Business Journal, Mr. Beaman, you said, "All other things being equal, I generally come down on the side that private enterprise is more effective at getting things done than the government." Mr. Beaman, do you support maintaining the public power model of TVA?

Mr. Beaman. Also in that article, thank you for the question, Senator, and I appreciate your concern about that.

Also in that article, I think it said, because I know I said it in the interview, and I hope they quoted it appropriately, that although I generally believe that the private sector is more efficient than government, in the case of TVA, I think TVA is more uniquely appropriately operated as a government entity.

Senator Markey. So do you commit to opposing any effort --

Mr. Beaman. I will --

Senator Markey. -- direct or indirect, to private TVA or outsource its core functions to private entities?

Mr. Beaman. Yes, sir.

Senator Markey. So at a time when utility bills are going up across the Country because of Trump's anti-energy policies, it is more important than ever to have public power that is responsive to TVA customers, not to Wall Street shareholders. And we need a commitment to public power.

So I am glad that that is the position that you are going to take.

Mr. Beaman. Yes, sir.

Senator Markey. We are facing an energy crisis in the Tennessee Valley and across the Country.

Mr. Beaman, which electricity generation source is the cheapest to build or operate on average nationwide?

Mr. Beaman. You know, that is something, thank you, because that is something that I want to really delve into and

explore and make sure that I have all the accurate facts about that, and make sure that I am really knowledgeable so that in developing our integrated resource plan that we come up with the very best combination.

Senator Markey. So I will give you the early returns on your research. Solar is in fact the cheapest megawatt to build and operate on average. It rings up at about $58 a megawatt hour. By comparison, fossil gas is $78 to $200 per megawatt hour. So all of that is without question part of this whole set of decisions you are going to have to make.

Mr. Beaman. Thank you.

Senator Markey. We also need board members who have qualifications and the judgment to do the job. Mr. Beaman, you said that you are accompanied here today by Pastor Steve Berger. Mr. Berger has said some very controversial things about the LGBTQ communities. He said, if it was left to myself, I would take a baseball bat and beat the hell out of every single one of them. So I know that Senator Whitehouse has already asked you a question on this subject.

My question to you is, do you agree with those comments?

Mr. Beaman. No, I do not. And furthermore, I have never heard Pastor Berger say such things.

Senator Markey. So, you are under consideration for serving on the board of the Nation's largest public power

utility. And it is very important that the values that are being represented by the TVA are those that we aspire to as a Nation, to protect everyone.

I thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you.

Senator Lummis?

Senator Lummis. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

First of all, Mr. Beaman, thank you for your willingness to serve.

Mr. Beaman. Thank you.

Senator Lummis. I am from Wyoming. So I am going to focus my questions on Mr. Weaver. But I do appreciate your willingness to serve.

Mr. Beaman. Thank you.

Senator Lummis. Mr. Weaver, welcome. Thank you for your willingness to serve as well.

I want to start by asking a question about an NRC draft rule. It has to do with groundwater protection at uranium in situ recovery sites.

Now, there is quite a bit of in situ uranium in Wyoming. I have been to in situ facilities. They look a little bit like beehives just sitting on the surface. Because you are driving charges into the ground that then will produce in a well-type scenario. It is fascinating.

The concern is that the draft in situ rule on groundwater protection at uranium in situ recovery sites would increase monitoring and compliance costs, despite decades of evidence showing that in situ operations pose extremely low risk to groundwater. So if confirmed, how would you ensure that the NRC's IRS rule or in situ rule aligns with President Trump's Executive Order 14300 by taking what the President describes as a risk-informed narrowly tailored approach, rather than a very broad measure that increases costs?

Mr. Weaver. Senator, thank you for meeting with me prior to this hearing. I appreciated that opportunity.

I am not aware of the draft rule. It is something I would look at, should I be confirmed. But I can speak a little bit about risk-informing. I do think that is the way forward, writ large, for the NRC. It makes us more efficient, but also keeps the resources focused on those things that are most risk-significant.

So I think it is something I would definitely, if I do end up looking at that proposed rule, I would look at it through that risk-informed lens.

Senator Lummis. Through that lens. Perfect. That is an excellent answer.

With regard to the nuclear fuel supply chain, as you know, bringing U.S. enrichment technology online and onshore would be

really helpful. We are, there are places where we have pinch points in our energy production. One of them is less in nuclear mining than in enrichment and conversion.

So how would you go about processing licenses for U.S.-owned nuclear fuel facilities, including enrichment facilities and conversion facilities?

Mr. Weaver. Thank you for that question, Senator. I am aware that conversion is a limiting factor, as enrichment is as well. And with the uranium ban, the Russian uranium ban looming, we as a Country need to move expeditiously.

With respect to licensing in general for fuel cycle facilities, I think the NRC is doing a lot of work on the ADVANCE Act to be more efficient in licensing. Although the ADVANCE Act targeted advanced reactors primarily, I think the staff intends to bring those same efficiencies over to the fuel cycle arena. I would support that.

The other thing I can say about enrichment, prior, I have been consulting with an enrichment company and I am aware of some of the challenges that they have faced, there is language in the Atomic Energy Act that puts some additional requirements on enrichment facilities that are not applicable to other fuel cycle facilities. From my perspective, it is not based, there is not a safety case for having those extra restrictions. It would be something, potential legislative fixes to look at.

Senator Lummis. I will look forward to working with you on that.

With regard to other NRC commissioners, how can you see yourself collaborating with the other commissioners to reflect the NRC's mission as a nuclear safety regulator while still enabling the use of some of these new technologies?

Mr. Weaver. Thank you for that question. I do agree that having a full commission definitely facilitates better answers when you get those five different perspectives, and it allows us to move ahead.

Specifically with respect to your question on enabling, for me what enabling means is that we do efficient, effective reviews that get to a safety answer in a timely manner. So I think that is not different than being safe. I think they are the same, I see them as the same thing.

Senator Lummis. Thank you.

Madam Chairwoman, would you indulge on one more question?

Senator Capito. I will indulge you.

Senator Lummis. Thank you. Do you plan to ensure that advanced reactor developers that are already deep into the licensing process can benefit from modernizing the NRC, so it doesn't apply just to future developers, but it is companies that are already in this long, arduous process?

Mr. Weaver. Thank you for that question. So, process

changes and improvements at the NRC should apply to all of our applicants, whether they are currently engaged or prospective applicants. Those types of things should apply to everyone.

Senator Lummis. Well, Madam Chairman, we did have a lovely conversation, and obviously this is important to my State and many others. This technology is important to our Country. I look forward to enthusiastically supporting your nomination, Mr. Weaver, thank you.

And again, Mr. Beaman, it was very nice to meet you. And if the occasion falls on me to get to work with you, I will look forward to it.

Mr. Beaman. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator. I was going to do a little stall tactic here, because I knew our two Senators were on their way. I don't know, Senator Schiff, do you want to -- are you ready, Senator Sullivan?

Well, I will ask a question of Mr. Beaman just really quickly. Mr. Beaman, you mentioned you were a Tennessee native. What part of Tennessee are you from originally?

Mr. Beaman. Nashville, born and raised.

Senator Capito. So you are from the big city, I would consider that. When I think of TVA, I think about affordability for those particularly in the more rural areas, where I know Tennessee and the other States that are impacted by TVA have

economic challenges, and TVA could play a bit part, and that is part of their mission. I just want to put that on your radar screen, and I will turn to Senator Sullivan.

Senator Sullivan. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the witnesses and their families for their desire to be considered for these positions.

Mr. Weaver, let me start with you. We have had a lot of hearings here on the NRC's oversight in the new nuclear capabilities that we have, with micronuclear advances. Yet the older system of the regulations and the permitting timelines that have taken years, sometimes decades, to move out, which is driving a lot of our nuclear industry, our nuclear innovation overseas, particularly places like China.

So what do you think we need to be doing to kind of essentially modernize the NRC's ability to permit projects that aren't really any more Three Mile Island type projects, but projects for micronuclear reactors, advanced nuclear technologies, even in remote places like in Alaska, where one of our military bases, as you probably know, is in final stages for having advanced small scale nuclear power generation for that base, maybe for remote communities that still rely on diesel?

How do we need to think about that? It is a really big issue. And the NRC in my view has been too slow to address this.

Mr. Weaver. Senator, thank you for that question. I did meet with your staff, really enjoyed that.

So, microreactors are typically one one-hundredth, sometimes one-one thousandth or even smaller than some of the big reactors that might be --

Senator Sullivan. Yes. But the permitting framework at the NRC seems to kind of still use that framework for the big projects in a way that relates to the smaller projects. It doesn't seem to make sense.

Mr. Weaver. So, given their smaller size and smaller risk and depending on the technology, I think a different approach might be appropriate.

Senator Sullivan. How would you, do you have any thoughts or ideas on that? Because it is a really big issue. We have talked about it a lot here. It is bipartisan, right? This isn't a really partisan issue. It is just kind of thinking in a more advanced way to address the technological changes and not give our biggest adversary, China, a leg up on nuclear technologies and nuclear development.

Mr. Weaver. Senator, I don't know what is in the rulemakings that are currently going on. They haven't been made public. But the smaller reactors, the rule book, the rules, as you alluded to, are written for large light water reactors. So when we come in with a new technology that is not a light water

reactors, or it is much smaller, we have got to look at the regulations to make sure they are ensuring safety, but at the appropriate scale for the risk of the activity that the company is seeking a license for.

Senator Sullivan. Okay, good. Thank you. I really hope, if confirmed, and I think you should be, that you put a lot of effort into this. Because it is something we in this committee have been focused on but I think we could use more guidance from the NRC. You are the experts.

Let me turn to you, Mr. Beaman. The Tennessee Valley authority a lot of times people are confused by what it does, its role, its purpose. I think that the idea of having federally-mandated, statutorily created authorities such as the Tennessee Valley Authority in a lot of ways makes sense. We have done it a few times. We have what is called the Denali Commission up in Alaska that is very focused on our unique challenges with regard to infrastructure.

But every now and then there are people who say, oh, these are boondoggles and you know, they are outdated, I think the Tennessee Valley Authority was created in the 1930s, if I am not mistaken. Can you give kind of an update on why you think an organization like this, even though it was mandated decades ago, is still relevant, not just for the region in which it serves, but for the Country?

Mr. Beaman. Thank you, Senator, for those questions. And I really do believe that even though TVA, the TVA Act was passed in 1933, TVA has done an outstanding job of lifting a previously very depressed area of the Country into a pretty prosperous area that is flourishing. However, there are still areas in the rural south and Tennessee Valley that still need development, economic development. Tennessee Valley Authority helps provide the residents of the Tennessee Valley with rates that are 70 percent less, less than 70 percent of the rest of the Country.

So it still is performing its original mission, still doing a good job, and we are still working to try to extend the development to further and further into more rural areas that need it.

Senator Sullivan. Good, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Senator Schiff?

Senator Schiff. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Beaman, you pointed to your experience in the beverage business as part of your qualification to serve with the TVA. I want to ask you about a different experience that gives me great concern. It was your experience in writing this letter, this is a December 2020 letter you signed, that falsely and dangerously stated, "There is no doubt President Donald J. Trump is the lawful winner of the presidential election." This was in 2020.

"Joe Biden is not President-elect." The letter goes on to ask battleground State legislatures to appoint false electors and ask Congress to "reject any competing slates in favor of Vice President Biden from these States."

Less than a month after this letter was published, I was at the Capitol when insurrectionists attacked this building to try to return that election.

So let me ask you, Mr. Beaman, do you still believe that Joe Biden was not the lawful President after the 2020 election?

Mr. Beaman. At this point, I do not.

Senator Schiff. You do not believe he was, or you do not believe what you stated in your letter?

Mr. Beaman. No, I am sorry. Let me clarify. At this point, I do not still believe that Joe Biden was not properly elected.

Senator Schiff. So you acknowledge that he was properly elected in 2020?

Mr. Beaman. Yes, I do.

Senator Schiff. And tell me what accounted for your change of view from then to now?

Mr. Beaman. Because I have learned, gathered more information, more facts.

Senator Schiff. And what about that information or facts did you gather than changed your view?

Mr. Beaman. Well, I gained enough trust in the electoral process that I realized that it was a fair election.

Senator Schiff. And in terms of what happened on January 6th and the attack on this building, are you prepared to denounce those that tried to overturn the election on January 6th?

Mr. Beaman. I think it was -- anybody that was trying to overturn the election through any sort of violence like that is way off base.

Senator Schiff. I appreciate your saying that. It will be obviously necessary if you were to get this position that you can be counted on to swear and fulfill your oath to uphold the Constitution. And one of the most basic precepts of which is to respect our electoral process.

I think you have been asked about this before, but I want to underscore the importance and ask you again about TVA's public character. I think it has served the region extremely well and has been a great model. Are you committed to maintaining that public model, or would you entertain privatizing any portion of TVA?

Mr. Beaman. Senator, I appreciate your question. I share your concern, and I am happy to tell you that I believe TVA is uniquely appropriate as a public utility. It can serve best its mission as a public utility.

Senator Schiff. So you would oppose efforts at any privatization of TVA or its components?

Mr. Beaman. Yes.

Senator Schiff. Thank you.

Mr. Weaver, I enjoyed having a chance to meet with you in the office and I appreciate your experience. Share a few of your thoughts, if you would, on what role you think nuclear power will play in supplying some of these new data centers, what particular challenges lie ahead of us, and how you see your role on the Commission?

Mr. Weaver. Thank you for meeting with me yesterday, Senator. I appreciated that time.

The data centers, NRC's role in all of this, I would like to see us have a large nuclear fleet, but that is not my job. My job is to make sure what fleet we do have is safe.

So in terms of SMRs for data centers or any other reactors for data centers, my role on the Commission would be to ensure the Commission is ready, willing and able to timely review and render a safety decision in a timely manner on whatever applications we receive. We are not to select one technology over the other.

So I would seek to have resources that would allow us to do that.

Senator Schiff. And I think nuclear power is going to be

an important piece of our overall energy supply. And if there are new modular reactors that make sense, then we should move forward with them.

Can you give us the confidence that should you review a new design and decide that the safety was in question, you are prepared to vote against it, and even if it might cost you your position?

Mr. Weaver. Absolutely, Senator.

Senator Schiff. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator Capito. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, all the Senators who are here, for the questions.

I think we are at the end of the road here. I am going to ask unanimous consent to enter into the record various letters of support for today's nominees. So without objection, I will order that.

[The referenced information follows:]

Senator Capito. With no further questions, I would like to thank the nominees, not just for coming today, but for your willingness to serve. And all of my colleagues, for their participation.

Senators who wish to submit written questions, and I believe that was alluded to by some of our Senators, wanting to submit written questions, they have until 5:00 p.m. tomorrow, December 4th, to do so. The nominees' responses to those questions are due back to the committee no later than 10 a.m. on Monday, December 8th. I realize that is a tight time frame, but we are putting that time frame in, and they will be submitted for that record.

With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:26 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]