Statement of David A. Wright

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before the

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Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and honorable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I wish 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 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, connect, and grow professionally, and in my opinion, they are truly some of the best and brightest in the federal government.

Almost a year ago, 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 the safe licensing of nuclear technology, not impede its progress. In this light, I'd 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'd 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.