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Chairman Capito Leads First EPW Oversight Hearing of NRC Since 2023, Urges Further Improvement, Efficiency from the Commission

Below is the opening statement of Chairman Shelley Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) as delivered.

"This morning, we are going to hold our first oversight hearing on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the first one we've had since March 2023. Since our last oversight hearing, the outlook for the nuclear industry continues to rapidly evolve, and with that, the work and issues pending before the Commission have significantly changed.

"Today, we will discuss some of those changes as well as ongoing policy, licensing, and management activities, and work to identify opportunities to meet this moment for nuclear energy. American homes and businesses need more affordable and reliable energy, and need that power as soon as possible.

"As our nation's nuclear safety regulator, the NRC is central to determining the future of nuclear power in our energy system. For decades, the NRC took too long, cost too much, and did not have a predictable and efficient process to approve new licenses or modernize outdated regulations.

"That is why I worked with Ranking Member Whitehouse to get the ADVANCE Act, signed into law last year. The ADVANCE Act was passed to spur the Commission, to give the Commissions tools to take urgent, bold steps to set the agency on the right course for the next generation of nuclear energy.

"Since the bill was signed into law, the NRC staff and the Commission have been hard at work implementing the law. The Commission updated its Mission Statement for the first time in 35 years, since the NRC first articulated a mission in 1990, to accurately reflect the NRC's role today and to recognize that nuclear energy benefits the public.

"This Mission Statement must now guide both the staff and the Commission in their daily work. Ultimately, the NRC's success will be judged on what they do, not just on what they say. That means establishing clear and achievable safety regulations, and approving licensing actions in an efficient, affordable, and timely manner.

"This is where President Trump's Executive Orders complement the ADVANCE Act. In May, President Trump issued Executive Order 14300 to reform the NRC by establishing clear licensing deadlines, reconsidering how the agency is organized, and revising outdated regulations.

"I support President Trump's objective to enable the quick and safe deployment of nuclear power. The initial signs to improve licensing efficiencies are encouraging.

"In August, I visited Wyoming…we learned a lot, it's the construction site of TerraPower, a leading, innovative nuclear company. I heard how the NRC is revising its processes to help expedite the construction of advanced nuclear reactors.

"Since initially accepting the TerraPower's license application, the NRC has considerably shortened their review time to reflect an improved approval process. In a novel approach, the NRC approved TerraPower's request to separate nuclear and non-nuclear energy systems to allow the State of Wyoming to permit parts of the system while the NRC completes its safety review.

"To make these changes predictable and durable, the Commission must ensure they can be repeated for future license applications and the NRC staff must then execute these streamlined processes.

"Ultimately, it is the Commission's responsibility to set NRC policy, approve nuclear regulations, and adjudicate licensing disputes. The Commissioners must respond to Congressional oversight, and we will continue to hold them accountable for their decisions and the ongoing work of [the Commissioners] and their staff.

"The staff has initiated a comprehensive review and revision of all the NRC's regulations, pursuant to President Trump's Executive Order. This is an enormous task and must be done deliberately.

"Creating rapid and major disruptions to the nuclear regulatory framework may unintentionally create instability and lead to uncertainty for financing for future projects. And through all the various initiatives, the NRC must not lose sight of the central role of ensuring nuclear safety.

"To be successful in this effort, the NRC must work with us, with Congress, the regulated community, and other stakeholders. That is why we're here this morning, so we can hear the Commission's plan to successfully implement the ADVANCE Act and the Executive Orders, to get an understanding of how they are prioritizing their work, and to challenge the Commissioners to further improve.

"I'm optimistic the information that we gather today will be useful in my ongoing bipartisan efforts with Ranking Member Whitehouse to enable the use of nuclear energy."

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