

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

"Good morning and thank you for joining us today as we hear from members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on the NRC's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2027. This is the first time that the Committee is hearing from Chairman Nieh and Commissioner Weaver, as they were confirmed last year with bipartisan support.

"Since being designated Chairman on January the 8th, Chairman Nieh has been actively overseeing the implementation of the ADVANCE Act, Executive Order 14300, while also making sure licenses are efficiently reviewed and approved.

"Because of Commissioner Wright's tenure as Chairman throughout 2025, the NRC was well-positioned to accelerate its work under Chairman Nieh. Commissioner Wright, thank you for your steady hand last year. We really appreciate it.

"Of particular note, Commissioner Wright worked with Commissioner Crowell to update the NRC's Mission Statement to align with today's reality that we need to preserve and rapidly expand nuclear capacity. Thank you both for that. That goal will be achieved by the NRC enabling the safe and secure use of radioactive material and nuclear energy.

"This updated Mission Statement is paying dividends as the Commission, the NRC staff and the industry undergoes a rapid change. This rapid change is partially driven by the bipartisan efforts of this Committee to get the NRC to do its work

smarter, faster and cheaper, and to do so without compromising the Agency's foundational goal of ensuring nuclear safety.

"I have previously expressed caution, particularly with the likelihood of unintended consequences, about the potential impacts of creating regulatory uncertainty if the NRC does not accomplish its task deliberately.

"So far, the Commission's work is encouraging, but the most consequential work I do believe still remains in front of us. The Commission's proposed 2027 budget reflects the Agency's recent successes, accounts for high-priority ongoing work and forecasts expected workload.

"One success was when the Commission re-baselined its primary reactor oversight and inspection programs earlier this year, which will yield savings both for staffing and funding. I have previously supported this long-running effort to reexamine the Reactor Oversight Process, so I am pleased to see the Commission ambitiously move forward with this initiative.

"The Commission has also approved an Agency reorganization that aligns the NRC staff with current and projected work, consolidates unnecessary administrative staffing and eliminates levels of bureaucracy.

"The NRC is in the midst of a wholesale review and revision of its regulations. This broad effort requires more near-term resources for rulemaking, but it should result in long-term budget savings.

"Most importantly, the NRC is projecting an increase of licensing work, the purpose for which the Agency exists. That licensing work will be completed faster and with fewer staff due to efficiencies that were directed by this Congress in the ADVANCE Act.

"Those licensing efficiencies are already evident. The NRC recently completed the fastest ever subsequent license renewal for a reactor, nearly cutting in half the time and cost of what was normal at the Agency two years ago.

"The multitude of these changes heighten the importance of the Commission's strategic planning, its role in developing and executing the Agency's budget and in modeling the leadership traits that are needed to sustain the changing culture we are seeing at the NRC.

"I want to thank the Commission for both the efficiency for which you are working and the thoughtfulness for which you are fulfilling your responsibilities. For example, at the recommendation of Commissioner Marzano, the Commission directed the staff to develop a change management plan to ensure that the new organizational structure is clearly communicated and deliberately undertaken. This will help make the Commission's actions successful and durable.

"I would also like to commend Chairman Nieh, the entire Commission and the NRC staff for working in a bipartisan way with this Committee to keep us informed about their work.

"As we discuss the NRC's budget proposal today, I will explore how the initial positive steps will be translated into an enduring framework that can deliver what Congress, the administration, industry and the public expect from our nation's nuclear safety regulator.

"As States across the country, including my state of West Virginia, consider nuclear power's potential meet the growing energy demand, I expect the NRC will prove through its actions that it will not be an obstacle to reliable, clean electricity generation."

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