



COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRATS
ENERGY & COMMERCE
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
Hearing on “Oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission”**

I want to thank the Subcommittee Chairmen and Ranking Members for holding this Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversight hearing. Welcome Chairman Burns, Commissioners Svinicki and Ostendorff, and welcome back to the Committee Commissioner Baran.

This is a critical moment in time for the nuclear industry and its regulators. The Commission should be commended for its ongoing efforts to adapt the size and structure of the NRC to today’s regulatory realities.

And it’s clear that moving toward a safe, efficient and modern nuclear fleet should be an important part of our nation’s effort to combat climate change. That is why I’m pleased to see progress is being made on the construction and licensing of the first four new commercial power reactors in decades. Advancements in nuclear technology, particularly in the area of small modular reactors, hold the possibility of a newer, safer generation of nuclear power.

However, nuclear power and technology still have challenges to overcome. For new reactors, the test is to show that such units can be brought online in a timely and cost effective manner --a question that, for now, remains unanswered. For existing units, it’s critical that they be able to meet the safety needs of a post-Fukushima world, the security challenges of a post-9/11 world, and the financial requirements of a market characterized by some of the lowest natural gas and renewable prices in recent history. We also still need to address the storage and disposal of nuclear waste and the rapidly accelerating phenomenon of decommissioned units.

As I stated previously, I believe there is an important role for nuclear energy to play in addressing global climate change, but I want to make perfectly clear that safety must come first. I am, therefore, both interested in and concerned about recent votes by the Commission to reject the recommendations of the NRC’s professional staff with regard to certain post-Fukushima safeguards. In no way, shape or form can safety take a back seat to cost or competitive pressures. That would be a recipe for disaster. The job of the Commission is to

regulate nuclear power for the benefit of all Americans, not just one industry or sector, so we must work together to find a way forward for nuclear energy without sacrificing safeguards.

Again, I want to thank the Commissioners for coming today and I look forward to hearing the testimony.

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