



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

DEMOCRATS

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**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., submitted for the record  
House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
Hearing on “DOE for the 21st Century: Science, Environment, and National  
Security Missions”**

Thank you for holding this important hearing on one of the nation’s most vital national security programs.

The work of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and the DOE laboratories is critical to keeping this nation and our allies safe.

DOE’s work maintaining the nation’s nuclear deterrent and advancing science in a variety of energy and security fields has also been a cornerstone of the Energy and Commerce Committee’s oversight efforts. For example, we have held numerous hearings on a wide variety of challenges facing the national labs and examined various solutions to some of the problems we have uncovered.

Continuing that work, we have the heads of two distinguished panels that have completed very thorough reviews of the nuclear security enterprise and of DOE’s national laboratories more generally. The reports produced by these panels underscore that the weapons complex and national labs have achieved a great deal in both national security and science endeavors.

However, ongoing achievements in these areas is neither inevitable nor guaranteed. Both panels highlight a variety of structural and cultural challenges facing NNSA and the labs. In particular, the Panel on the Governance of the Nuclear Security Enterprise concludes that the current arrangement between DOE and a “separately organized” NNSA has failed to provide the effective, mission-focused capability that Congress envisioned.

The panel, for example, concludes that overlapping staffs and the lack of clear lines of authority and responsibility have created confusion and tensions among headquarters, field sites, and contractors, as well as a host of other issues involving management and organizational culture.

As a result, the panel has concluded that NNSA is in need of major reform.

Members of this Committee are no strangers to the accidents, missed deadlines, and massive cost overruns that have plagued NNSA and the nuclear weapons labs over the years. Just this past June, we held a hearing on the radiological release that closed the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico. This facility likely will be reopened, but not before taxpayers will pay more than half a billion dollars or more in cleanup and restoration costs.

If we fail to address the governance and management issues at NNSA, we risk continued accidents and spiraling costs, which ultimately will be borne by the taxpayer. More importantly, given NNSA's mission, failure to address the problems at the agency can ultimately affect our national security. Over the long term, nothing less than the overall efficacy of our nuclear deterrent is at stake. We must make this right.

Fortunately, the panel before us today has provided the Congress with an excellent roadmap for reforming NNSA and the labs. The panel recommends, for example, that Congress amend the NNSA Act and adopt related legislation to reintegrate NNSA into DOE. The panel also makes a number of other critical recommendations across a range of operational and management areas, including empowering leadership with well-defined roles and undertaking major reform of the relationships between DOE, NNSA, and its contractors.

NNSA was established 16 years ago, but these management challenges began almost immediately. Problems that many leaders at the time predicted—including leaders of this Committee and President Clinton—have indeed occurred.

The mission of maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent is too important and there are simply too many detailed recommendations to be addressed properly in a single hearing.

I urge the Chairman to take both of these panel's reports and conduct extensive oversight on how to begin correcting the multitude of problems that have affected NNSA for too long. In particular, it is critical that we explore how to best enact the significant reforms to NNSA's governance that the panel cites as a first step to getting the nuclear security enterprise on a sustainable path.

This Committee can make a real difference here, and I stand ready to work with my colleagues to take on this work.

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