

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Ranking Member Diana DeGette

Markup of 3 Bills

May 16, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Duncan.

We're here today to consider three bills: H.R. 1042, H.R. 1640, and H.R. 3277. The first, H.R. 1042, will prohibit the importation of Russian-made uranium into the U.S. I think you would be hard pressed to find a single person in this room who thinks our continued reliance on Russian-made uranium is not a problem that must be addressed – including myself.

And while this legislation, on its face, seems like a commonsense step to take, I believe we need to take a step back and realize the effect this proposal could have on our domestic nuclear fleet. The United States currently imports nearly one-fourth of its enriched uranium from Russia. This dependence on Russian-made uranium remains a constant threat to our fleet's future readiness – and puts on our national security at risk.

So, yes – we need to end our reliance on Russian-made uranium. The problem with this legislation is that it operates in a vacuum. We should never be in a position where we are relying on a potential adversary for the resources needed to protect our nation. If we are going to ban the use of Russian-made uranium, we first need a plan to source that material from somewhere else.

We can't simply flip a switch and domestically produce the fuel needed for our fleet overnight, or even by 2028. As it stands now, the United States can produce only one-third of the uranium our domestic fleet needs. Expanding that capability to fully satisfy our own needs will take significant time and an even more significant investment.

Before we cut ourselves from Russia's uranium supply, we need to work with our allies to ensure we have alternate sources of uranium in place for our nuclear fleet. We also need a long-term strategy to handle the storage of spent fuel rods, here, in the United States.

The legislation – as it stands now – still does not address the need for a strategy to deal with spent nuclear fuel. Whether it be in terms of Russian-made uranium or the overall expansion of nuclear power here in the U.S., we cannot continue to ignore the issue of how to properly store spent fuel any longer.

If nuclear is going to be part of our overall plan to combat the climate crisis, we need to develop a long-term storage plan that not only ensures the safety of the American people but incorporates the voices of the communities that could be directly impacted.

May 16, 2023

Page 2

I stand ready to work with any of my colleagues to develop these strategies so that we can effectively end our reliance on Russian-made uranium – but I believe deeply that the plan must come first.

Doing so otherwise could put us in a perilous situation that could have severe consequences for our nation's security. While I agree with the overall intent of H.R. 1042, I am appalled that we are even considering H.R. 1640.

H.R. 1640 will kill a congressionally mandated rulemaking that seeks to save Americans money on their energy costs. It furthers a misplaced fear that the government is somehow coming for your gas stoves. Let me be clear: the Department of Energy is not going to ban your gas stove. Full stop.

The Dept. of Energy's energy efficiency rules – that it's required by Congress to put in place – cover both gas and electric stoves. They also apply only to new products – and, in no way, will affect the stove you currently own.

In fact, more than half of all gas stoves on the market today already comply with the rule being proposed and would still be fully available to consumers across the country. So, let's tone down the rhetoric on this one. Instead of getting the American people ginned up on a bogus issue, let's focus on the long list of issues that do need to be addressed.

Finally, the third bill we have before us today, H.R. 3277, will elevate the head of the Office of Cybersecurity to an assistant secretary level position. This is a bill that was previously passed out of the committee by a voice vote last Congress, and I expect it will do so again today.

Thank you, and I yield back.