

Opening Statement  
Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change  
Hearing on “Cleaning Up Communities: Options for the Storage and Disposal of Spent Nuclear  
Fuel”  
June 13, 2019

It has been over 30 years since Congress last made significant changes to this law. Unfortunately, in that time very little has been accomplished to address our nation’s need to safely store and dispose of the spent nuclear fuel that is a byproduct of electricity generation at nuclear power plants across the country.

Today, there are 121 communities across the country that have nuclear waste nearby. These communities are rightfully expressing frustration as more and more nuclear plants close, but there is no concrete solution to storage or disposal of the spent nuclear fuel. Whether it is a general safety concern, or the desire of the community to redevelop the land currently housing the spent fuel, we must find a path forward to begin the process of moving nuclear waste out of these communities.

At this hearing, we will be discussing three bills that take different approaches to addressing the spent nuclear fuel stalemate in our country.

Representative McNerney and Ranking Member Shimkus have introduced H.R. 2699, an updated version of the legislation reported by the Committee and passed by the House in the last Congress. I would like to thank them both for their leadership on this issue. Last Congress, then-Subcommittee Chairman Shimkus worked with us to address our concerns and incorporate interim storage language authored by Representative Matsui. That led to a successful effort in the House and I look forward to continuing to work with him and Mr. McNerney on this issue.

We will also discuss H.R. 3136, the STORE Nuclear Fuel Act, introduced by Ms. Matsui. The bill establishes an interim storage program at the Department of Energy (DOE), which will allow for consolidated, temporary storage of spent nuclear fuel, with priority given to waste currently stored at decommissioned nuclear power plants. Authorizing interim storage will allow DOE to consolidate waste at one or two sites instead of 121 sites in communities across the country. Consolidated storage will ensure spent nuclear fuel is managed more safely and securely, while allowing communities with decommissioned plants to begin working toward redeveloping those sites.

Interim storage is the best near-term solution to stop the nuclear waste stalemate, and I commend Representative Matsui for her efforts and leadership on this issue.

Finally, the Committee will review H.R. 2995, the Spent Fuel Prioritization Act, introduced by Representative Mike Levin. This bill prioritizes the removal of spent nuclear fuel from decommissioned nuclear power plants in areas with large populations and high seismic hazard.

Once again, I appreciate the efforts of the bill sponsors and thank them for their leadership on this important issue.