

Committee on Energy and Commerce

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Energy Ranking Member Kathy Castor**

Hearing on “Nuclear Regulatory Commission: Oversight of Activities, Priorities, and Fiscal Year 2027 Budget”

April 22, 2026

Nuclear energy has been an area of bipartisan cooperation in this committee. Last Congress, we passed the bipartisan ADVANCE Act that was signed by President Biden to prepare the United States to lead the world in the development and deployment of advanced nuclear reactors.

We passed the Bipartisan Instructure Law to safely ensure that existing nuclear plants were not retired prematurely. Democrats passed the Inflation Reduction Act that provided long-term incentives for broader deployment of nuclear, including new technologies and advanced reactors, with an eye towards energy workers, particularly in coal and distressed energy communities.

The Biden Administration set a target of 300 GW of nuclear energy capacity by 2050. The Trump Administration has targeted 400 GW. These are ambitious goals that require bipartisanship, an independent Nuclear Regulatory Commission and a nuclear industry that has the trust of the American people. President Trump’s actions are jeopardizing progress and trust. We should address it together.

Last June, the President illegally fired Commissioner Christopher Hanson without cause. That was the first time an NRC commissioner has ever been fired. The President issued Executive Orders directing the NRC – again, an independent regulator – to reduce its workforce and modify safety rules while urging hasty approval of nuclear reactors.

The NRC has lost 400 professionals, particularly in offices handling safety. Instead, the Administration has deployed DOGE staffers with no experience in nuclear safety – and that is alarming. It appears that the White House is illegally trying to change approval processes to turn the NRC into a “rubber stamp”.

We can’t pretend this is business as usual. The NRC is the international gold standard for nuclear energy safety – but the Administration is actively undermining that reputation and could actually slow the deployment of nuclear energy, not just in the United States, but across the world.

There’s a right way to do this. The NRC must license reactors efficiently, safely, and transparently to deliver the resources we need while ensuring public confidence in nuclear energy.

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When Democrats were in the majority, we worked with Republicans expand nuclear energy, modernize regulation, and secure domestic nuclear fuel supplies.

Today, the Trump Administration and DOGE are eating away at the confidence and safety of America's nuclear enterprise and our international alliances. China dominates the buildout of new nuclear power plants, hosting nearly half of the reactors currently under construction globally.

Here's the dirty secret that the Trump Administration doesn't want people to know: the United States is struggling in part because nuclear energy is forced to compete with coal and natural gas – which are heavily subsidized and strongly favored by President Trump and many in Congress. People can't trust that the federal government is committed to truly expanding the clean, affordable and reliable energy that we need. And why should they trust this Administration?

Over the last year, the Department of Energy killed over 300 energy projects. They canceled loans to build transmission lines. The Administration illegally tried to impose a moratorium on offshore wind even as Americans are being crushed by high utility bills and demand for power increases.

And now the Interior Department won't even follow Congressional orders to give us a status update on energy project permits. Solar, batteries, and wind are the resources we have right now. They made up 92% of new U.S. power capacity last year. In comparison, Energy Secretary Wright sat before this Committee just last week and said, even for the nuclear reactors that will be "critical" by July 4th, we're years away from plugging them into the grid and selling electricity.

If Republicans want to ramp up nuclear energy resources and address skyrocketing costs for ratepayers, it is vital to understand that nuclear power is complementary to cheaper renewable energy and storage.

Republicans say we need more energy to power the AI revolution. So, they should stand up when the Administration engages in these corrupt, unfair practices that result in less energy. They should work with Democrats to pass policy that actually brings down costs for our neighbors back home.

I yield back.