

Nominations Hearing
Thursday, March 17, 2022

Chairman Manchin's Opening Statement

- The Committee will come to order.
- The Committee meets today to consider the pending nomination of Dr. Kathryn Huff to be the Assistant Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Energy.
- Dr. Huff has been with the Department of Energy since last May, serving as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy.
- In that capacity, she performed the duties of the Assistant Secretary on an acting basis for nearly 10 months.
- And she has performed those duties well. I have already had the opportunity to work with her. She has brief me on Ukraine's nuclear reactors.
- I have seen see her commitment to the mission of the Office of Nuclear Energy and have benefited from her extensive knowledge of nuclear issues.
- So, I am delighted to welcome Dr. Huff to the Committee this morning.
- I am grateful that she has set aside her promising academic

career to serve in this important public position.

- Nearly 70 years ago, President Eisenhower addressed the United Nations on what became known as “Atoms for Peace.”
- After reviewing the deadly threat that the nuclear arms race posed to “not only the peace, but the very life of the world,” President Eisenhower called upon the nations of the world to strip the atom of “its military casing and adapt it to the arts of peace.”
- He sought to apply nuclear power “to provide abundant electrical energy” to the world, to serve, in his words, “the needs rather than the fears of the world.”
- Eisenhower’s Atoms for Peace speech opened the door to our own nuclear power program and our support for nuclear power programs in dozens of other nations throughout the world.
- On the one hand, our nuclear power program has been an amazing success.
- Nuclear power generates roughly 20 percent of the nation’s electricity—cleanly, safely, affordably, and reliably.
- But on the other hand, our nuclear program is in decline, and has been for some time.
- After peaking 10 years ago with 104 operating reactors, our

nuclear fleet is now down to 93 operating reactors. Most reactors are over 40 years old.

- Only two new nuclear power plants have been built and come on line since the Three Mile Island accident over 40 years ago, and only two more are still under construction.
- Nuclear power plants cost too much and take too long to build.
- The existing technology is too demanding and too unforgiving.
- We still haven't found a solution to the nuclear waste problem.
- But we cannot afford to give up on nuclear power. We cannot meet our climate goals and meet our energy needs without it.
- We cannot afford to eliminate our existing fleet of nuclear reactors. But they will not last forever, and must be replaced by new, safer, and more affordable reactor designs.
- It will be Dr. Huff's job to help preserve the existing fleet of nuclear power plants and keep them operating as long as they safely can, but also to develop and deploy the next generation of advanced reactor technologies needed to power the nation well into the 21st century.

- And if that isn't enough, we will look to her to help find a solution to the nuclear waste problem, which has defied solution for over 60 years.
- As I said at the outset, I have worked with Dr. Huff, and I believe she is up to the task.
- Welcome, Dr. Huff, and thank you for being here this morning and for your willingness to serve in this important position.
- I look forward to learning more about your background, your views and priorities, and more about the status of the nuclear reactors in Ukraine.