

The Honorable John Barrasso, M.D.

Ranking Member

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Business Meeting

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

10:00 a.m. in 366 Dirksen SOB

Opening Statement

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for holding today's business meeting.

There are many important bills before us. That includes the Nuclear Fuel Security Act.

Nuclear energy is essential for America's energy security. It is also critical for our national security.

For more than two years, this committee has discussed the need to ensure an American supply of uranium for our nation's existing and advanced reactors.

Most recently, this committee held a hearing in March to examine the nuclear fuel cycle. A key outcome was a better understanding of the need to revitalize America's nuclear fuel supply chain and ban imports of Russian uranium.

Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a story, titled -

"The West Needs Russia to Power Its Nuclear Comeback."

The article explains that -

"Nuclear power in the West is having a long-awaited revival, with new reactors opening in the U.S. and Europe..."

The paper goes on to say that there is -

*“[a] gaping hole in the plan:
The West doesn’t have enough nuclear fuel...”*

“Even more vexing, the biggest source of critical ingredients is Russia and its state monopoly, Rosatom, which is implicated in supporting the war in Ukraine.”

Today we are taking concrete action to address this gaping hole. Our legislation will not only help rebuild America’s nuclear fuel supply chain. It will also ban Russian uranium imports.

America’s utilities and reactor developers are ready to transition away from Russian uranium. But they need the option to purchase American nuclear fuel. The Nuclear Fuel Security Act provides that option.

Today’s agenda also includes America’s Outdoor Recreation Act.

This historic, first-of-its-kind recreation package will boost our outdoor recreation economy. It will increase access to the outdoors, streamline and simplify agency processes, and improve America’s recreation infrastructure.

It is bipartisan, and contains several bills from members of this Committee. This includes two of my bills: the Federal Interior Land Media Act, or the FILM Act, and the Cape and Antler Preservation Enhancement Act, or the CAPE Act.

The FILM Act modernizes film and photography permitting on public lands. Currently, anyone who uploads a video of their National Park adventures to a social media platform must obtain a permit and pay a fee.

While the Park Service has not enforced this requirement consistently, they have been fining people whose videos go viral. This can happen even when those videos involve one person using nothing more than a phone.

Meanwhile, large productions that require extensive lighting and staging equipment do not require a permit if federal agencies deem them to be non-commercial.

The FILM Act does away with this absurd permitting scheme. It requires agencies to focus on actual impacts to park resources — not the type of content visitors create.

It is a win for the First Amendment and free speech, and for common-sense management of our public lands.

The CAPE Act is a conservation victory for Grand Teton National Park's native bighorn sheep. These iconic animals are threatened by non-native mountain goats.

Through coordinated efforts with the Park Service, volunteers play a major role in helping to conserve the bighorn sheep by culling the non-native goats. Current law gives discretion to the Park Service to donate the meat obtained during these wildlife management activities.

Unfortunately, the rest of the animal goes to waste.

The CAPE Act remedies this by allowing for the donation of hides and horns, including to volunteers who help protect our native bighorn sheep.

I also support many of the other items on today's agenda.

However, there are several bills and two nominees that I opposed last Congress, and that I continue to oppose. I will talk more about my opposition to these agenda items later in the markup.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.