

# **Chairman Manchin's Opening Statement During a Full Committee Hearing to Examine the Nuclear Fuel Cycle**

## **Introduction**

- The committee will come to order.
- Today we will be discussing the U.S. nuclear fuel life cycle and the issues that our Committee must work to address this Congress.
- With the passage of the Energy Act, Inflation Reduction Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, and the CHIPS and Science Act, Congress has authorized new programs and provided significant financial investment to ensure the continued operation of our current nuclear fleet and the development of the next generation of advanced reactors and technologies.
- We have also created programs to ensure that the energy communities which have powered our country to greatness have the opportunity to lead the way forward by building advanced nuclear reactors at shuttered fossil fuel sites.
- Before the enactment of these bills, half of our nuclear fleet faced premature retirement by the end of this decade.
- But now, the approximately 95 gigawatts of reliable, baseload generation from our existing 92 reactors can be preserved into the next decade.

- That is an important accomplishment that highlights a win-win for our energy security and our climate goals.
- Without these critical pieces of legislation, the U.S. nuclear future would be grim.

### **Energy Security & Geopolitical Risk**

- Yet, we still have work to do.
- Putin's war in Ukraine has brought the geopolitical risk of not having energy independence from those who don't share our values into clear focus.
- But it's not just Europe that became reliant on cheap Russian energy. We, as the super power of the world, are still dependent on Russian nuclear fuel.
- Right now, our country is deficient in nearly every aspect of the fuel cycle. This must change and it must change quickly.
- Whether it is uranium mining, milling, conversion, enrichment, nuclear fuel fabrication, power generation, or nuclear waste storage and disposal, there is work to be done.

## **Conversion & Enrichment**

- Starting with conversion and enrichment – simply put, Russia dominates the global market, representing nearly half of the international capacity for both processes.
- We have bipartisan bills to remedy this situation and I look forward to continuing to work closely with Ranking Member Barrasso, Senator Risch, and Senator Warner on this important issue.
- The U.S. has become dependent on Russian-enriched uranium to meet our commercial nuclear generation requirements.
- Prior to the war, we planned to supply our advanced reactors using Russian High-Assay Low-Enriched Uranium.
- This must change and initial steps have been taken to alleviate these issues. We included \$700 million in the IRA to supply our advanced reactors with American HALEU.
- However, much more needs to be done, including working closely with our allies and partners to increase nuclear fuel production and greatly expanding our efforts to onshore both uranium conversion and enrichment activities.
- Last month, I introduced the Nuclear Fuel Security Act with Senators Barrasso and Risch, which provides the authority required to expand

our uranium conversion and enrichment capacity to meet our domestic fuel requirements.

- We very nearly got this enacted at the end of last year, with the support of the Department of Energy, and I hope we can move quickly on it this year.

### **Waste Storage & Disposal**

- Nuclear energy currently constitutes just about 20 percent of our electricity generation and represents half of our clean electricity. And it is clear nuclear will continue to be an essential part of the mix well into the future.
- The baseload power it provides is an integral part of our energy security, and it will be impossible to reach our emission reduction goals without the continued operation of the current fleet and the construction of the next generation of advanced reactors.
- But that means we need to stop kicking the issue of nuclear waste down the road – and by that I mean what to do with all the waste that’s accumulated to date and the waste that is to come.
- We must act to provide a path forward to safely and responsibly dispose of our nation’s nuclear waste.

- It is Congress's responsibility to act. Specifically, it is this Committee's responsibility to come to agreement on legislation to provide a fair path forward.
- Nuclear waste is not a technical problem. It is a political problem.
- Since the 1957 National Academy of Sciences report, we have known the safe and responsible solution for disposing of our nuclear waste is deep geologic disposal.
- Inaction is also fiscally irresponsible.
- About \$8.6 billion has been paid in settlements and final judgements because Congress has not provided a solution.
- That is approximately \$2 million a day, or \$167,000 over the course of today's hearing, due to our inability to establish a permanent program to handle our nuclear waste.
- There are sites in the U.S. that present ideal conditions for safe disposal.
- But we must have a consent-based program in place that can thoughtfully and effectively engage with state, local, and tribal governments to find a suitable means to site a repository.
- We have text ready to go, the Nuclear Waste Administration Act, which incorporates recommendations from the Blue Ribbon

Commission, the Department of Energy, the National Labs, the Government Accountability Office, and the National Academies of Science on how to properly site, construct, and operate nuclear waste storage and repository facilities.

- It is my hope that we can finally find a path forward on this critical issue that we can't ignore any longer.
- Finally, we also must extend the Price-Anderson Act, which expires at the end of 2025. For almost 70 years, this law has helped protect our commercial nuclear and R&D activities from civil litigation. Without extending the Act, it's not an exaggeration to say our nuclear industry will cease to exist.

## **Conclusion**

- I know members of our committee and the communities you represent hold strongly-held beliefs regarding nuclear energy. I also know that our constituents sent us here to create solutions to tough problems. So I look forward to a lively and productive discussion today.
- We have a wonderful group of witnesses representing both commercial and federal stakeholders whose viewpoints are critical for having this discussion today.
- I appreciate our witnesses joining us to discuss these important issues.

- With that, I will turn it over to Senator Barrasso for his opening remarks.
- Thank you, Senator Barrasso.
- I'd like to turn to our witnesses,
  - We will begin with Assistant Secretary, Dr. Katy Huff
  - He will be followed by the Idaho National Laboratory Director, Dr. John Wagner
  - And finally, Constellation President and CEO, Joseph Dominguez
- Thank you all for joining us today,
- Dr. Huff, we'll begin with your opening remarks.
- Thank you, Dr. Huff. We will now go to Dr. Wagner.
- Finally, Mr. Dominguez.
- Thank you all again for being here with us, and for your testimony. We will now begin with questions.