



Committee: Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Event: [Full Committee Hearing To Consider Pending Nominations](#)
Date: July 9, 2025
Time: 9:30 AM
Place: 366 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Member Toplines:

Chair Mike Lee (R-UT): Lee emphasized the role the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of International Affairs (OIA) plays to advance America's economic and energy goals, counter malign influences, and advocate for energy priorities. He also highlighted the importance of the Office of Environmental Management (EM), specifically for nuclear maintenance and decommissioning, as well as the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's (EERE) geothermal, hydropower, biofuels, and critical minerals research. He noted President **Donald Trump's** interest in securing domestic supply chains for critical minerals, strengthening the domestic industrial sector, and modernizing the grid. Lee praised the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) for its work to revitalize the domestic coal industry, and he expressed strong support for all of the nominees before the Committee. He also emphasized the need for permitting reform and the revitalization of abandoned mines.

Sen. Dave McCormick (R-PA): McCormick spoke in favor of **Tim Walsh**, with a focus on his military service.

Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM)¹: Heinrich stressed the importance of the positions under consideration. He asked the nominees to commit to following the law and protecting the health of American citizens and land. He criticized the Trump administration for its rollback of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs, as well as the clean energy tax credit cuts seen in the recently enacted [One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#) (OBBBA).

Witness Toplines:

[David Eisner to be Assistant Secretary of Energy for International Affairs:](#) Eisner spoke on his passion for public service, as well as his experience enacting the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act](#).

[Timothy Walsh to be Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management:](#) Walsh discussed his former military service. He also shared more information about his experience in constructing semiconductor chip plants. Walsh asserted that it is this generation's duty to address legacy nuclear waste, drive down environmental risk, and support U.S. jobs.

¹ Written testimony for the Chair and Ranking Member was not available at the time of this memo's distribution.

[Audrey Robertson to be Assistant Secretary of Energy for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy](#): Robertson emphasized the importance of energy security. She referenced her early career history on the corporate side of energy infrastructure development. She expressed her interest in producing domestic energy with more efficiency and less risk. She shared her experience as an energy entrepreneur, which featured utility scale solar, small modular reactors, next generation geothermal technologies, and advanced sodium-ion batteries. She criticized the use of labels like “clean energy” and supported an all-of-the-above energy approach.

[Lanny Erdos to be the Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement of the United States Department of the Interior](#): Erdos elaborated on his 35 years of public service within the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. He also spoke on his experience in the private sector, with a focus on mining. He emphasized the importance of coal-power and noted his interest in increased state authority over permitting.

Major Takeaways:

- Sen. **John Barrasso** (R-WV) highlighted the importance of coal development and timely [National Environmental Policy Act](#) reviews. He asked how Robertson will plan to prioritize EERE goals given its limited funding. Robertson referred to the President’s priority of reliable, affordable, secure energy. Barrasso urged the International Energy Agency to return to unbiased energy leadership.
 - Lee emphasized the need for expedited permitting and increased timeline transparency for coal mines. He asked how the coal industry contributes to OSMRE’s Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Fund, and Erdos explained that AML is funded in two streams: one stemming from coal industry contributions through a fee-based system, and the other coming from the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#).
 - Sen. **Steve Daines** (R-MT) criticized the Biden administration’s OSMRE for withholding permits for several coal mines. He praised the Trump administration’s dissimilar approach to permitting, and referenced the OBBBA’s language to authorize a Montana coal mine.
 - Sen. **Jim Justice** (R-WV) supported each nominee, and emphasized the importance of domestic energy production. He contended that no energy sources should receive “handouts” and expressed personal support for the coal industry.
- Lee referenced the National Nuclear Safety Administration’s [Surplus Plutonium Disposition Program Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) (FEIS), which requires DOE to dispose of 34 metric tons of defense plutonium.
 - Lee and Walsh spoke in support of [Executive Order 14302](#), titled “Reinvigorating the Nuclear Industrial Base,” which would rescind the FEIS and repurpose plutonium to fuel advanced nuclear reactors.
 - Heinrich noted that New Mexico produces 25 to 30 percent of domestically demanded enriched uranium.
- Lee referenced his effort to accelerate the adoption of geothermal energy through the OBBBA, which was removed due to a [Byrd Rule](#) violation.

- Robertson emphasized the importance of geothermal energy deployment given its potential to provide stable baseload power.
- Heinrich highlighted Robertson's experience executing solar projects, noting that the North American Electric Reliability Corporation's [2025 Summer Reliability Assessment](#) reported that Texas solar and battery investments have decreased the risk of power emergencies from 15 to 3 percent within a year.
 - Robertson contended that the timeline of utility-scale battery technologies have not been adequately tested.
 - Heinrich disagreed, given New Mexico's early adoption of these technologies within harsh environments, and noted the energy reliability and affordability benefits his constituents have realized.
- Sen. **Catherine Cortez-Masto** (D-NV) contended that an all-of-the-above energy approach should take into account the resources of states, and noted the importance of solar for Nevada's energy independence.
 - Cortez-Masto also expressed concern for grid integration amidst budget cuts; Robertson asserted that grid security is a priority of the President and called for the government to "do more with less."
 - Sen. **Lisa Murkowski** (R-AK) emphasized the importance of all-of-the-above energy in Alaska due to its geographically-necessitated energy independence.
- Sen. **John Hickenlooper** (D-CO) noted the importance of EERE and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Colorado as sources of innovation and employment. He called to attention Trump's plan to implement significant budget and staff cuts.
 - Robertson expressed support for investments in reliable energy development, grid modernization, geothermal energy, and small modular reactors.
 - Sen. **Alex Padilla** (D-CA) emphasized the importance of EERE's role for energy demonstration projects and innovative energy technologies. He highlighted the need for financial incentives, and he warned that Trump's proposed budget cuts will impact grid resilience and grid infrastructure deployment.
 - Sen. **Maria Cantwell** (D-WA) shared concerns regarding budget cuts to EERE, specifically related to battery technology development. Robertson agreed on a personal level with the importance of battery technology innovation, but noted that the demands of the budget may cause a shift in priorities.
 - Murkowski also expressed concerns regarding Trump's budget proposal, which would end the Weatherization Assistance Program.
- Hickenlooper also noted the potential for solar and batteries to support data center energy needs.
- Lee noted that, under the Biden administration, OIA was used to broker international deals on climate cooperation. He asked Eisner how he would realign OIA to focus on energy dominance. Eisner emphasized his alignment with the President's goals.
- Lee argued that efficiency standards result in lower-quality appliances. Robertson argued that burdensome regulations that do not produce a net benefit should be ended.