



Committee: House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Energy
Event: [American Energy Dominance: Dawn of the New Nuclear Era](#)
Date: January 7, 2026
Time: 10:15 AM
Place: 2123 Rayburn House Office Building

Executive Summary:

The House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Energy’s hearing focused on the role of nuclear energy in meeting rapidly-growing U.S. electricity demand, while maintaining public trust in nuclear safety. Members broadly agreed that nuclear power is essential for grid reliability, particularly as artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced manufacturing drive load growth. Republicans emphasized the importance of streamlining licensing, rebuilding the nuclear workforce, and strengthening domestic fuel supply chains to accelerate nuclear deployment. Democrats stressed the importance of preserving the independence of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), providing regulatory transparency for all energy sources, and developing a comprehensive waste management plan to sustain public confidence and bipartisan support for nuclear expansion.

Member Toplines:

[Chair Bob Latta \(R-OH-05\)](#): Latta emphasized that expanding the U.S. nuclear sector is essential to meeting growing demand for reliable energy, while also strengthening U.S. national security. He highlighted the importance of past congressional actions that have modernized nuclear regulation and licensing efficiency such as the *ADVANCE Act* and argued that effective implementation of these reforms will be critical to sustaining long-term nuclear growth. Latta also pointed to the progress made by the Trump administration in restarting previously-closed reactors and modernizing the U.S. nuclear fleet.

[Full Committee Chair Brett Guthrie \(R-KY-02\)](#): Guthrie argued that nuclear energy is central to American energy dominance and national security, warning that China’s rapidly-accelerating reactor buildout poses a direct challenge to U.S. leadership in global nuclear commerce and geopolitics. He emphasized the importance of legislation such as the *ADVANCE Act* in expanding the U.S. nuclear sector by removing licensing and permitting barriers.

[Ranking Member Kathy Castor \(D-FL-14\)](#): Castor emphasized that solar and wind energy has been effective in keeping electricity bills down while meeting growing energy demand. She underscored that Democrats have consistently supported the nuclear sector, while arguing that regulatory and financing uncertainty under the Trump administration has undermined sustained nuclear deployment. Castor also warned that instability at the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Loan Programs Office, combined with attacks on the NRC’s independence risk eroding investor confidence and weakening the U.S. nuclear sector overall.

[Ranking Member of the Full Committee Frank Pallone \(D-NJ-06\)](#): Pallone explained that he supports nuclear power as a clean, reliable source of energy, but argued that the Trump administration's actions have seriously undermined confidence in the safety and independence of the nuclear regulatory system. He described the firing of the NRC Chair and increased involvement by the administration in NRC decisionmaking as a "crisis" that risks weakening safety oversight in the nuclear industry and putting Americans' lives at risk.

Witness Toplines:

[Maria Korsnick, President and CEO, Nuclear Energy Institute](#): Korsnick argued that nuclear power is critical to meeting U.S. energy demands, while maintaining grid reliability and national security. She applauded the Committee for taking bipartisan action to preserve the existing nuclear fleet and advance regulatory modernization such as the *ADVANCE Act*. Korsnick urged Congress to focus on predictable regulation and targeted financial tools to reduce early-project risk and enable continued large-scale nuclear deployment.

[John Williams, Senior VP of Technical Services & External Affairs, Southern Company](#): Williams highlighted the financial and construction risks associated with new nuclear development, such as high upfront costs and schedule uncertainty. He explained that congressional tools such as enhanced tax credits and federal risk-mitigation policies are essential to speed up the deployment of nuclear reactors across the private sector.

[John Wagner, Director, Idaho National Laboratory](#): Wagner warned that China and Russia now dominate global nuclear construction and could surpass U.S. nuclear capacity by the end of the decade, underscoring the urgency of accelerating domestic reactor deployment. He emphasized that sustained investment in the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear research – as well as regulatory modernization – are needed to speed up the large-scale commercial buildout.

[Judi Greenwald, President and CEO, Nuclear Innovation Alliance](#): Greenwald argued that nuclear energy uniquely supports an affordable, reliable, and clean U.S. energy system, while using less land than other energy sources. She emphasized that the continued growth of the domestic nuclear industry depends on maintaining regulatory independence, as well as adequate funding and staffing. Greenwald urged Congress to ensure the full implementation of the *ADVANCE Act* and strong oversight of nuclear programs within DOE and the Department of Defense to ensure that safety standards are maintained.

Major Takeaways

- Nuclear Energy is Vital to Meeting Rising Energy Demand
 - Members on both sides of the aisle emphasized that nuclear energy is critical to meeting the energy demand driven by AI and advanced manufacturing.
 - Rep. **Troy Balderson** (R-OH-12) and Guthrie underscored nuclear's role as a reliable baseload resource, necessary to supporting economic growth and emerging technologies in the U.S.
 - Rep. **Scott Peters** (D-CA-50) described nuclear power as essential to modernizing an aging grid facing load growth.

- Reps. **Doris Matsui** (D-CA-07), **Jennifer McClellan** (D-VA-04), **Nick Langworthy** (R-NY-23), and Pallone highlighted nuclear energy’s importance as a zero-emissions energy source that supports affordability and reliability when deployed responsibly.
- NRC Independence and Public Trust
 - Reps. **Rob Menendez** (D-NJ-08), **Paul Tonko** (D-NY-20), **Lizzie Fletcher** (D-TX-07), Castor, Pallone, McClellan, and Matsui stressed that maintaining a clear separation between the NRC’s safety mission and DOE’s research and investment role is foundational to maintaining public trust.
 - They also warned that perceived – or real political – interference in NRC decision-making could erode public confidence and jeopardize future bipartisan support for nuclear expansion.
 - Castor, Pallone, and Menendez raised concerns about staffing losses at both the NRC and DOE, arguing that weakened technical capacity will also undermine nuclear safety and delay licensing.
 - Pallone and Tonko emphasized that a single safety incident could end public support for nuclear expansion, making regulatory independence not just a safety issue, but also an industry imperative.
- Streamlining Nuclear Deployment
 - Latta, Fletcher, and Langworthy supported reducing “unnecessary” regulatory burdens and streamlining licensing to accelerate deployment, while emphasizing that reforms must never compromise safety.
 - Latta stressed the need for increased coordination between DOE and the NRC to get projects off the ground faster, particularly through workforce development and regulatory efficiency.
 - Fletcher and Langworthy emphasized the need for a clear alignment of federal and state permitting and environmental review processes.
 - Fletcher, Peters, and Guthrie also highlighted the importance of the bipartisan *ADVANCE Act*, but agreed that further congressional action is needed to scale the deployment of advanced reactors to meet demand.
- Advanced Reactors and Waste Management
 - Reps. **Gary Palmer** (R-AL-06), **Randy Weber** (R-TX-14), **Russell Fry** (R-SC-07), Peters, and Matsui highlighted the management of spent reactor fuel as a central unresolved challenge to nuclear expansion.
 - Weber, Peters, Palmer, and Fry emphasized the importance of developing long-term solutions for dealing with nuclear waste, while acknowledging that recycling alone will not solve the problem alone.
 - Matsui called for modernizing the *Nuclear Waste Policy Act* to establish a comprehensive federal framework for processing nuclear waste.
 - Peters and Weber stressed that using advanced nuclear reactors and fuel recycling processes could improve resource efficiency and energy security, but noted the importance of clear congressional direction.
- Workforce Development and Staffing
 - Reps. **Mariannette Miller-Meeks** (R-IA-01), Latta, and Castor noted that decades of stagnation in the American nuclear industry have hollowed out domestic nuclear workforce capacity and supply chains.

- Miller-Meeks emphasized that rebuilding America’s global nuclear energy leadership will require investing in domestic manufacturing, skilled labor, and the broader industrial base for nuclear energy development.
- Castor raised concerns that staffing losses at DOE and the NRC risk further depleting the institutional expertise needed for the safe and timely deployment of nuclear energy.
- Competition with Russia and China
 - Reps. **Marc Veasey** (D-TX-33), Miller-Meeks, and Peters highlighted that China and Russia now dominate global nuclear reactor construction and exports, making domestic nuclear deployment a matter of national security.
 - Peters and Veasey stressed that U.S. leadership depends on working closely with allies to develop a stable nuclear supply chain.
 - They emphasized the importance of ensuring that American safety standards set the global benchmark for nuclear development, rather than allowing adversaries to dominate with “dirty and dated” reactors.
 - Guthrie and Palmer warned against continued reliance on adversarial nations for uranium and other critical materials.
 - Guthrie and Peters also pointed to the importance of allied cooperation, particularly Canada, Europe, and the United Kingdom, as essential to supporting next-generation reactors, while decreasing reliance on foreign adversaries.