



Committee: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy & Water Development
Event: [Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Hearing: National Nuclear Security Administration](#)
Date: April 29, 2026

Executive Summary:

On April 29, 2026, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy & Water Development held a hearing on the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) budget and priorities. Members of both parties expressed concern over maintaining a safe, reliable, and modern nuclear deterrent, while ensuring effective oversight of expanded programs. Republicans emphasized the need to modernize the U.S.'s nuclear infrastructure and avoid delays to development that could weaken national security. Democrats raised concerns about staffing and funding cuts, and pressed NNSA to restore support for reactor conversion and nuclear nonproliferation.

Member Toplines:

*Subcommittee Chair John Kennedy (R-LA):*¹ Kennedy acknowledged the need to modernize U.S. nuclear capabilities to balance against global competitors such as China. He pointed to the administration's proposed 35 percent budget increase for NNSA's "total weapons activities," but explained that funding alone will not resolve persistent challenges. Kennedy raised concerns regarding delays in producing sufficient plutonium pits, suggesting management issues beyond just funding constraints.

Subcommittee Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA): Murray emphasized the work of the NNSA to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent, support naval nuclear propulsion, and advance nonproliferation efforts. She argued that the Trump administration's budget proposal unnecessarily prioritizes nuclear weapons development over essential nonproliferation programs. Murray also raised concerns over how funds would be allocated, alongside longstanding issues with cost overruns, project management, and insufficient oversight capacity.

Witness Toplines:

Brandon Williams, Administrator, NNSA: Williams explained that President Trump's FY27 budget request for NNSA will help support the full modernization of the nuclear triad, recapitalization of production infrastructure, and continued investment in nuclear security research. He underscored that all major weapons programs are on or ahead of schedule and pointed to the agency's dual role in both deterrence and nonproliferation.

David Beck, Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, NNSA: Beck did not provide an opening statement.

¹ Opening statements were not available online at the time of this memo's distribution.

Matthew Napoli, Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, NNSA: Napoli did not provide an opening statement.

Major Takeaways:

Nuclear Deterrence, Modernization, and Global Competition:

- Chair Kennedy, along with Sens. **Bill Hagerty** (R-TN) and **John Hoeven** (R-ND) stressed the need to maintain and expand the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile to keep up with adversaries such as China, Russia, and Iran.
- Hagerty highlighted that the NNSA's budget must prioritize modernization to fix aging U.S. nuclear infrastructure.
- Kennedy emphasized that while increased defense and nuclear spending is necessary, it must be done efficiently given fiscal constraints.

Program Management:

- Hagerty cited a report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office showing NNSA project cost overruns increased from \$2.1 billion in 2023 to \$4.8 billion in 2025.
- Kennedy added that “not a penny can be wasted,” stressing the need for better funding execution by NNSA.

Nonproliferation and Nuclear Security:

- Murray emphasized the work of NNSA's Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation program in preventing nuclear smuggling, monitoring and verifying nuclear treaty compliance, as well as mitigating the effects of radiological incidents.
- She raised concerns about funding cuts, and argued that NNSA should restore funding to nuclear reactor conversion, forensic research, and domestic uranium supply programs.
- Sen. **Jeff Merkley** (D-OR) warned that proposed cuts to global nuclear material security programs could increase the risk of proliferation by terrorist groups.

Workforce and Environmental Challenges:

- Murray highlighted the loss of hundreds of key NNSA staff and questioned the agency's progress rebuilding its workforce.
- Sen. **Martin Heinrich** (D-NM) raised workforce-related challenges at Los Alamos, particularly housing shortages that can complicate recruitment and retention.
- Heinrich also pointed to the stalled cleanup of a hexavalent chromium plume near Los Alamos, warning of potential impacts on the San Ildefonso Pueblo's drinking water.

Pit Production:

- Murray and Merkley raised concerns regarding the cost, scope, and planning of new plutonium pit production.
- Murray asked NNSA to provide her office with its “integrated master schedule” for pit production for review upon completion.