



Committee: Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC)
Event: [To receive testimony on the Department of Energy and National Nuclear Security Administration atomic energy defense activities in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2027 and the Future Years Nuclear Security Program](#)
Date: May 13, 2026

Executive Summary: On May 13, 2026, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing to examine the Fiscal Year 2027 defense authorization request for the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA). Secretary of Energy **Chris Wright** provided testimony. [Tim Walsh](#), the Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management, and [Brandon Williams](#), the Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security and NNSA Administrator, served as witnesses and provided written testimony. Members highlighted the urgency of modernizing and updating nuclear programs highlighting competition with China and Russia as a key driver of concern. Democratic members raised concerns with proposed budget cuts to energy efficiency and cybersecurity programs.

Member Toplines:

*Chair Roger Wicker (R-MS)*¹: Wicker emphasized growing nuclear and geopolitical threats from Russia and China, arguing the United States must modernize its nuclear infrastructure to remain competitive. He highlighted concerns regarding delays in warhead modernization and plutonium pit production, while stressing the importance of advanced nuclear technologies and naval reactors to national security. Wicker also criticized the department for failing to request funding for the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile warhead program despite congressional direction, arguing the U.S. cannot afford delays in strengthening its deterrence capabilities.

*Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI)*²: Reed emphasized the growing demands facing the DOE and the National NNSA, arguing that expanding nuclear security responsibilities require sustained investment in workforce capacity, infrastructure, and modernization efforts. He raised concerns regarding the dismissal of experienced nuclear personnel earlier in the administration, warning that workforce instability could undermine the nation's nuclear deterrence and operational readiness. Reed also highlighted challenges related to the ongoing war in Iran, including the effect on oil prices.

Witness Toplines:

[Chris Wright, Secretary, DOE](#): Wright framed the FY2027 budget request around strengthening U.S. nuclear deterrence and advancing American nuclear leadership. He highlighted ongoing

¹ An opening statement for Chair Wicker was not available at the time of this memo's distribution.

² An opening statement for Ranking Member Whitehouse was not available at the time of this memo's distribution.

progress across multiple warhead modernization programs, expanded plutonium pit production, advances in fusion research, and increased production of high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU). Wright also emphasized efforts to reduce nuclear security threats and advance environmental cleanup activities.

Major Takeaways:

Domestic Fuel Supply:

- Secretary Wright highlighted ongoing initiatives including awards issued to restart domestic uranium enrichment and fuel fabrication.

Cybersecurity:

- Sen. **Kirsten Gillibrand** (D-NY) raised concerns about the proposed funding cuts to the DOE's Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER), warning that the reductions could create energy security and cybersecurity vulnerabilities.
 - Wright responded that the cuts reflect an effort to streamline the department after what he described as significant growth in DOE, arguing the administration is focused on improving efficiency rather than undermining security functions.

Energy Efficiency Programs:

- Sen. **Jeanne Shaheen** (D-NH) raised concerns about proposed cuts to DOE energy efficiency programs, arguing the reductions could increase energy costs for American consumers.
 - Wright argued that the energy efficiency regulations have negatively impacted domestic manufacturing and increased product costs, making certain appliances less affordable for low-income Americans. He argued for a balanced approach that promotes efficiency standards without imposing overly burdensome regulations.

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs):

- Sen. **Jim Bankes** (R-IN) highlighted small modular reactors (SMRs) and advanced nuclear technologies as key to strengthening national security. He asked about how the DOE planned to partner with the Department of the Navy to continue SMR pilot efforts.
 - Wright emphasized a strong working relationship and department support for SMR development.