

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Energy Chairman Bobby L. Rush**

***Hearing on “Keeping Us Safe and Secure: Oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission”***

**July 14, 2021**

Good morning. Today, the Subcommittee on Energy and the Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change convene for a joint oversight hearing with a focus on maintaining the safety and security of our nation’s nuclear power facilities and nuclear materials. For this important topic, it is a pleasure to have Chairman Christopher Hanson, Commissioner Jeff Baran, and Commissioner David Wright of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) before us today. Chairman Hanson, I would like to take a moment to congratulate you on recently becoming the 18th Chairman of the NRC.

Since the NRC’s establishment via the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974, it has fostered the protection of public health through the licensing and regulation of the civilian use of radioactive material applications. Further, it has promoted the protection of the environment and the security of nuclear activities through nuclear waste evaluations and international agreements.

The NRC’s continued leadership is essential for these reasons and more. For example, the NRC has a key role in the licensing and regulation of the commercial nuclear power industry, which is a major source of low-carbon electricity. The generation of electricity from carbon-free and low-carbon energy sources, like nuclear energy, is critical in the face of climate change.

At present, nuclear power is the world’s second largest source of low-carbon electricity just behind hydroelectric power. In the United States alone, last year, over 470 million metric tons of carbon dioxide pollution were avoided through nuclear power plants — despite the decommissioning and closure of plants, like those in my home state of Illinois.

In light of these facts, nuclear power facilities, and the low-carbon electricity they produce, are valuable tools as we work to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels — which produce climate change inducing greenhouse gas pollution. In addition, the review of developing nuclear technologies, like small modular reactors and advanced reactors, is equally important. Taking this all into account, we must make sizeable investment in the oversight of nuclear facilities and materials to ensure their safety and security. This is why I am pleased to see the NRC’s Fiscal Year 2022 budget request, which recommends a budget increase of \$43.4 million above Fiscal Year 2021 enacted levels.

In addition to this, it is important that the NRC conduct its oversight with deliberate consideration for those populations that have historically borne the brunt of persistent environmental health disparities — which have been caused by energy production and other environmental hazards. In this vein, I applaud NRC’s leadership for directing staff to review

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how environmental justice is addressed through the agency's programs, policies, and activities. Today, I look forward to a progress report on this directive and any related findings.

And with that, I yield to my friend and colleague, the Gentleman from Michigan, Ranking Member Upton, for five minutes.