

**Opening Statement of the Honorable John Shimkus
Subcommittees on Energy and Power & Environment and the Economy
Hearing on “Oversight of NRC Management and the Need for Legislative Reform”
December 12, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

We are holding this hearing today to conduct oversight of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and to consider H.R. 3132, Chairman Terry’s bill: the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Reorganization Plan Codification and Complements Act. The NRC’s role in protecting public health and safety and the environment is a vital one and we take our oversight responsibility very seriously. Thank you, commissioners, for making yourselves available today.

Earlier this year, on August 13, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit granted a writ of mandamus stating that “...the Nuclear Regulatory Commission must promptly continue with the legally mandated licensing process” for Yucca Mountain. Yet it wasn’t until November 18, three months later, that the commission finally issued an order directing the staff to proceed and resume the license review. While I largely agree with the commission’s order, I question why it took so long and why some key budget and schedule information is still missing.

Given the commission’s history on this topic, I wondered if the NRC was dragging its feet on this issue or if this is just the NRC’s normal pace of operation. As it turns out, the NRC seems to be losing its schedule discipline in a number of areas like new plant licensing, license extensions, and power uprate reviews just to name a few.

That seems odd given the growth in the NRC’s budget and personnel over the past ten years, the reduced number of operating reactors, the decrease in materials licenses, and the withdrawal of many new plants licenses.

So on November 21, Mr. Whitfield and I sent you a letter asking for more information to help the committee understand how the growth in your budget and decreased workload HAS NOT fostered timelier decision-making. At this time, I’d like to ask that it be included in the hearing record together with the NRC’s response.

Going forward, I will work with Chairmen Upton and Whitfield to bring greater scrutiny of the NRC’s ability to manage its workload and to make decisions in a timely fashion.

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