



FROM: Kountoupes Denham Carr & Reid

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RE: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee Confirmation Hearing to Consider the Nomination of Mr. Chris Wright to be Secretary of Energy

Topline Summary

- Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee convened to consider the nomination of Chris Wright to be Secretary of Energy
- During the hearing, Mr. Wright demonstrated he would take an above-all energy approach, taking advantage of both fossil fuels and renewable energy to ensure American energy independence and dominance. Mr. Wright specifically pointed to his desire to expand natural gas and nuclear production.
- Many members expressed enthusiasm towards Mr. Wright's unique background, strong passion for energy, and a desire to make energy more affordable and abundant in America. He was encouraged to expand underutilized sources like geothermal power and received bipartisan encouragement to expand the nuclear industry in America. Some committee members expressed concerns that he would overlook necessary environmental standards and not give enough attention to renewable energy sources like solar and wind. Concerns were also raised about several comments he made on social media regarding the California wildfires.

Senators Attending: Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT), Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), Senator James Risch (R-ID), Senator Steve Daines (R-MT), Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR), Senator David McCormick (R-PA), Senator Jim Justice (R-WV), Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Senator John Hoeven (R-ND), Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Senator Angus King (I-ME), Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA), Senator Ruben Gallego (D-AZ)

[Live Hearing Link](#)

Meeting called to order by Chairman Lee

Opening Statements

Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT): Good morning, and welcome to the very first hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee during the 119th Congress. really is a privilege to serve in this capacity as Chairman during such a pivotal moment in our nation's history, particularly as it relates to our nation's energy policies. Mr. Wright, thank you so much for joining us, joining us no, no less on your birthday. Now People you don't turn 30 twice in a lifetime.

But we can count today as your second 30th birthday if you'd prefer. I see that you're here with family and really enjoyed meeting each of them. And we'll look forward to hearing you introduce them in a moment when we hear from you. Your nomination in many ways really couldn't be coming at a more urgent time.

Over the past four years, Americans have suffered under a lot of policies that have made life more difficult, more uncertain, and more expensive. Energy prices have soared, driving up the cost of not only energy itself, but everything around it everything from housing to health care from gas to groceries. And as a result, families have struggled to make ends meet to make ends meet. And as it turns out, you need energy to do just about everything and when the cost of energy goes up.

The cost of everything else does to the Biden Administration has completely failed to recognize the fundamental fundamental role that energy plays in our lives and the devastating consequences of excessive and unwise government intervention. From the cost of goods to the strength of our national defense. affordable and reliable. Energy is the backbone of our economy, and even our way of life.

Now, America is of course blessed with an abundant supply of natural resources. Were blessed with oil and gas with coal, even with nuclear and the ingenuity behind that with geothermal with hydropower with wind and solar. And it's our responsibility to figure out how to harness these things safely, affordably and effectively. Unfortunately, the Biden Administration has done the exact opposite of those things.

On his very first day in office, President Biden halted new oil and natural gas leases on public lands and waters effectively cutting off access to resources that could have powered our economy in benefited the lives of ordinary Americans. Over the past four years, the same administration is dismantled domestic energy production, canceled leases, and weaponized regulations to discourage investment in pipelines and critical energy infrastructure. Instead of unleashing American energy, this administration has instead decided to reduce our access to energy. And they've reduced many of these tools within the Department of Energy to a political tool for advancing extreme climate policies that prioritize ideology over innovation, security and affordability.

These failures have caused devastating harm. Skyrocketing energy prices don't just hit consumers at the pump. They raise the cost of manufacturing, transportation and

everything in between. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve has been recklessly drained to historic lows.

These policies have eroded our energy independence as a country, making us dangerously and unwisely reliant on foreign suppliers, including some adversarial nations. This is why today's hearing is, I think, so important. The Department of Energy's responsibilities are vast, maintaining our nuclear stockpile, fostering innovation through research and development and ensuring affordable reliable energy for the people. If confirmed, Mr. Wright.

You will lead an agency with the potential to transform our energy future for the better. Your track record as the founder and leader of Liberty Energy speaks volumes about your qualifications and about the expertise and know how that you bring to the job. We understand the energy sector, and the many challenges that it faces including and especially those from the government. I'm eager to hear your plans for refocusing the Department of Energy on what ought to be its core mission, ensuring energy security, driving innovation, and lowering costs for American families.

American energy security is American national security, you cannot separate them they're inextricably intertwined. Producing more energy here at home is a national imperative. And I look forward to working with you and your colleagues. The people you will work with at the Department of Energy as well as my colleagues here on this Committee to ensure that the Department of Energy returns to its founding in all important purpose.

Mr. Wright, the challenges you will face the Secretary of Energy are significant, but so is the opportunity to restore America's standing as an energy superpower. I'm looking forward to the beginning of a collaborative effort to start a new course for our nation's energy policy. Thank you for your willingness to serve. And I look forward to today's discussion.

And we'll turn now and hear now from our Ranking Member, Senator Heinrich.

Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM): Thank you, Chairman Lee. And I want to welcome the new members of this Committee, as well as the returning members. And Happy Birthday, Mr. Wright. It's an honor to address you today as the newly appointed Ranking Member of this Committee, and I am honored to represent a state whose economy and whose identity are really so deeply connected to DOE's mission, Sandia and Los Alamos rank among the state's largest employers, offering stable mission driven jobs to nearly 30,000 people.

In 2023, their combined economic impact on my state reached nearly \$9 billion. And these investments have fueled research, development and scientific progress, driving global advancements in fields such as nuclear science, cybersecurity, clean energy and material science. Now, before continuing my remarks, I must express my disappointment that the Chair has decided to move forward with this hearing over my objection. Given the fact that, Mr. Wright your ethics and financial materials arrived yesterday after business hours, I

appreciate your responsiveness to my questions, your willingness to meet with me, but I don't think it is too much to ask that members of this Committee get 24 hours to review those documents.

Mr. Wright. It's unfortunate that our first order of business involved breaking Committee precedents, never the less because my concerns have gone on heated, we will proceed today. Some secretaries in the past have been surprised to learn that roughly half of DOE budget supports the nation's nuclear security enterprise through the National Nuclear Security Administration, and the cleanup of legacy nuclear waste from weapons produced during the Cold War through the Office of Environmental Management. And although only a fraction of its budget goes to Energy Research.

DOE is still the single largest supporter of basic research in the physical sciences, not just to the Office of Science, but also through the Title 17 Clean Energy Financing Program, and the Advanced Research Projects Agency. The Secretary of Energy must recognize the importance of DOE's research and development programs, and then at the national labs and not just for energy production, but also for efficient energy use national security, cybersecurity, climate change and maintaining our position of leadership in the world. The Secretary of Energy must also adapt to a rapidly evolving energy landscape, driven by three empirical trends. First, electric, electricity demand is growing for the first time in decades.

Advances in generative artificial intelligence technologies, and investments in manufacturing and data centers are driving up electricity demand. In fact, nationwide electric demand is expected to grow by 15% in just the next five years. Second, distributed renewable energy is getting cheaper. The deployment of renewable energy continues to accelerate exponentially, not in a linear fashion, and consistently outpaces EIA predictions Year over year.

The pace of this deployment is driving down energy costs giving Americans more energy freedom to choose how they want to heat and cool their homes or fuel their cars and trucks. Third, clean energy is driving economic growth. According to the International Energy Agency, clean energy accounted for 10% of global GDP growth in 2023. If confirmed, Mr. Wright, you will inherit a Department that has received historic levels of investment to fund programs and policies that are literally transforming the US economy.

These programs and policies were authorized by landmark legislation, including the Energy Act of 2020, the CHIPS and Science Act, the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, and those investments are paying off. Two years after CHIPS and Science Act, companies have announced more than \$395 billion of investments in semiconductors and electronics and the creation of over 115,000 jobs, primarily in manufacturing. Two years after passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, businesses, including battery manufacturers and auto companies have announced \$493 billion of investments, a 71% increase from the two year period preceding that legislation. And three years after the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure law, the administration announced \$568 billion in projects for over 66,000 projects across our country.

These landmark laws give the Secretary of Energy new resources and authorities to implement programs and policies that will unlock hundreds of gigawatts worth of solar wind and grid battery projects that have been stuck in interconnection queues all around the country. This hearing will provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate to the Committee that you will implement Congress's vision of energy abundance and enforce and uphold the laws of the land. I look forward to this discussion.

Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-CO): Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, Heinrich. I'm here today to introduce Chris Wright before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, fellow Coloradan on his birthday, and someone I've known for a number of years, I first met Chris, at a fundraising effort for scholarships for needy kids. We share the fact that we both married way over our heads is wife Liz is behind him. And like my wife, Robin, far outshines him in many regards.

Chris won't be surprised to hear me say that we disagree on a lot of things. And we were almost legendary, probably 12 or 13 years ago at a fancy Easter dinner in the middle of the day, and then getting further heated over some of the issues around energy. And I think what was interesting, my wife was very worried about our hosts and us being invited back. Whereas I don't think Chris and I took any offense at all.

And I think that, you know, some people would be surprised that I'm introducing him here. And yet, he's the scientist who has invested his life around energy and his indeed and unrestrained enthusiast for fossil fuels in in almost every regard, but he studied nuclear, he wouldn't start at university Colorado just for perfectly clear. But somehow he got ended up at MIT was one of my associates is known to have haunted and studied nuclear there in detail. Gotta got a master's is first year is working.

We're in solar, he has experience in wind. He is a practitioner and a key innovator around geothermal and the incredible potential that we have in geothermal. He is a scientist who is open to discussion. And he is again, a scientist who was a successful entrepreneur and has that ability to assess what is possible and what isn't.

Again, I am well known for the last 40 years I've been worried and working to address climate change. And I worry about the acceleration of the feed feedback loops. It could make what we saw in in Los Angeles over the past couple of weeks. A grim forshadowing of other events that could come.

But I think that what we're looking at now is the need for a comprehensive approach to energy. In every regard, Chris has spent a lot of time looking at poverty, not just in this country, but around the world and how energy affects that, and how it affects the health of people from in different countries. He is fully versed on the Assessments we've made, both on this Committee and as a Congress in the past couple of years to make investments around energy. And he respects that.

And I think as we go forward, I look forward to continuing the robust discussions. And I'm not going to hold back. And I know that he won't hold back either. And I think that's part of

the key of a democracy is to be able to sit down and really thrash out your your beliefs and what the facts are, and be able to measure them.

I think we both learned and evolved over the years on a number of issues, and I have high optimism we can work together. And I look forward to figuring out what are the best ways and the fastest ways we can address the climate challenges we face. So Chris, thank you for being willing to this public service. And I look forward to the discussion.

Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND): Thank you, Chairman Lee, and also Ranking Member Heinrich. Welcome. Welcome to you, Chris and your family. It's great to meet all of you.

I think it's fantastic that you're here. And of course, Lee is very important that you're here that was obvious right away when he came in to give you that huge hug moral support is unbelievable. And then to have your mom here is pretty cool on your birthday, 60th birthday. And as far as your grandson Miles, you know, seven months, but it's never too soon to start, you know, getting used to Senate hearings.

So I think bringing him and kind of getting him used to what goes on is great. I'm really pleased to follow up Senator Hickenlooper. I have great respect for him, your home state Senator, he's a trained geologist, he knows energy. And he's worked and helped me on a lot of things.

And I'm very pleased to to, to join you in this introduction. And really, it's appropriate because you live in Colorado, but at all, awful lot of your work has been done in North Dakota in my State of North Dakota, and you've had a huge, huge impact. When I started as governor in North Dakota in 2001. We produced 100,000, we're less than 100,000 Barrels oil, and it was going down, it was going down because we're drilling 14,000 foot vertical wells that were more cost effective places to do it.

So I started a policy called Empower North Dakota. And it wasn't just about producing more oil and gas was about producing energy as Senator Hickenlooper said from all sources. And we do in North Dakota, now we are a powerhouse energy and you know what? Well, but it came from creating the right climate, the right legal tax and regulatory climate to encourage energy development.

And it came down to getting entrepreneurs, great thinkers, people who were smart, well trained and motivated people who'd gone to places like MIT and Berkeley and had the latest greatest understanding of technologies and all kinds of things, people who would create companies, let's see, like Pinnacle technologies that started the hydraulic fracturing mapping industry, so folks can figure out where the energy was, and then folks that chaired companies like Stroud energy, and then started their own companies like liberty, energy, to actually do it, to unlock this energy potential here, and do it with the best environmental stewardship, the smallest footprint, right. And as a result of folks like that, Northcote went from less than 100,000 barrels of oil, going down to 1.5 million barrels a day, 1.5 million barrels of oil a day, not to mention all the natural gas with the best environmental stewardship in the world. And reality is your that entrepreneur I'm talking about Wright now, you and others. And as we're talking about, so if we really want and all the above, we

need guys, like you, Chris, that really understand energy, all aspects of energy, whether it's as one of my favorite presidents used to say nuclear energy, or oil and gas or anything else.

You have that incredible knowledge and understanding and capability to drive this technology to truly make us energy dominant. And that's what we need to focus on. You know, regardless of what kind of energy you may or may not favor, to truly have an all the above, we need to continue to drive that technology curve. And I can't think of anyone better than able to do that based on your training, your education, your interest, your accomplishments, and your experience.

And I'm just willing that you're, I'm just pleased that you're willing, you and your family are willing to stand up and serve. Thank you so much for being here today. Appreciate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Witnesses

Chris Wright, Nominee to be Secretary of Energy

Testimony

Q&A

Chairman Mike Lee (R-UT) said that Liberty Energy's Bettering Human Lives Report is a document he finds very informative. He said that the report provides what he considers a very clear-headed perspective to the climate change dialogue, which has been sorely missing in the discussions of these issues. He said that there are always trade offs when we are talking about energy and environmental issues. He said that the Department of Energy can play a critical role in addressing these issues, but that during the Biden administration, the department was being used solely to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without consideration of the consequences. He said that this approach of not taking the consequences into consideration has really harmed American families. The Chairman then asked Mr. Wright how the Department of Energy can focus on energy abundance, and how that can bring back the balance that American energy policy has been lacking over the last four years. Mr. Wright stated that energy is critical for the prosperity and safety of our country. He said that the department's labs have been centers of innovation across the spectrum and were key to us coming in front after World War II. He said that under his leadership, he will keep these labs focused on energizing, staying engaged with all of the energy sources that we have available to us and continuing innovation. He said his mission is to inspire people in this department to focus on what is most important: growing the supply of reliable, affordable energy. Chairman Lee said that supply is key given our growing population and changing uses of energy. He said that with data centers and AI making a big dent in energy needs, it is a poor time to be straying away from some of our energy sources when energy demand is at an all time high. He said that he is pleased to see that Mr. Wright clearly grasps the importance of this. The Chairman then asked him if he would suspend loans that have potential conflicts of interests with advisors who are both helping the granters and recipients simultaneously. Mr. Wright answered that he would once confirmed. He said that nothing is more important than integrity and the rule of law.

Ranking Member Martin Heinrich (D-NM) started by asking Mr. Wright if he would commit to visiting the Los Alamos lab once confirmed. Mr. Wright answered that he would absolutely commit to that and would love to visit together. The Ranking Member then asked him to discuss his divestment plans in the energy space. Mr. Wright said that he agreed with that, and said the ethics committee has conducted a review of all of his personal holdings. He said he has taken all actions to make sure he has absolutely no conflicts of interest. The Ranking Member said he appreciated Mr. Wright's comments from earlier about how he takes utmost importance with integrity and the rule of law. He then asked Mr. Wright that as secretary, if the OMB directed the department to not engage in a project that Congress expressly appropriated funding for, would he follow the law. Mr. Wright answered that as Secretary, the only way he operates is to follow the laws and statutes of the United States. The Ranking Member then mentioned a permitting bill that was voted 15-4 in the committee in the last Congress, and it wasn't signed because they hadn't reconciled with the House. He said this bill had important transmission line reforms that would help meet growing energy demands, and asked Mr. Wright how important this issue was in his view. Mr. Wright responded that he appreciated the Senator's question and how they have a lot of common overlap and concerns. He said that in the last few years we have seen energy prices go up and grid reliability go down, and he agrees that being able to build new transmission lines and improve existing ones is extremely important for lowering energy costs and increasing reliability. The Ranking Member said that the DOE has supported a lot of very important transmission projects, like the Southline Transmission Project in his home state of New Mexico. He asked Mr. Wright to assure him that the DOE will continue to use its resources and authority to continue projects like this to maintain grid reliability. Mr. Wright said he is aligned with the Senator and will continue to do whatever he can to strengthen existing lines and build up more.

Sen. Jim Justice (R-WV): Spends a brief moment introducing himself as a new Senator. He stated that his home state West Virginia knows energy and repeats that energy is everything and it must be solved. Senator Justice asked Mr. Wright if he is in a position to embrace all energy forms. Mr. Wright said they share a passion for energy, one that President Trump also shares. He added that energy is not just a part of the American economy, but it is the American economy, and for that reason we want energy from all sources. Senator Justice said if we don't solve the energy riddle in the next year and a half, we will be facing a crisis like no other but noted that we have the answer right below us here in America.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV): stated that the committee has started off with creating controversies that shouldn't exist. Senator Cortez Masto asked Mr. Wright if Nevadans can count on him to acknowledge that the failed Yucca Mountains project is unworkable. Mr. Wright said that if you are going to build large infrastructure, which would include nuclear waste facilities, you must have the local community on board. Senator Cortez Masto highlighted that President Trump is against the project and then repeated the previous question. Mr. Wright said he will work with the senator to find an area for long-term nuclear waste that incorporates the blessing of the local community. Senator Cortez Masto asked Mr. Wright what his understanding was in DOE's role in defense and national security. Mr. Wright said the NNSA is essential, as it is the critical designer, builder, and

maintainer of our nation's nuclear arsenal. He added that we have lost the ability to enrich uranium, to construct plutonium pits and so many other things that raise concerns about the safety and security of our nuclear stockpile. Senator Cortez Masto highlighted the DOE's essential programs such as public-private partnerships, workforce-cybersecurity with college and universities. Senator Cortez Masto asked Mr. Wright if he would push back against President Trump if he tried to cut any of those critical programs. Mr. Wright said it's too early to give any specifics about programs but noted that cybersecurity is critical. Senator Cortez Masto asked if he would push back against cutting funding from the National Security site in Nevada. Mr. Wright said he would support to the extent that he can in all efforts of national security. Senator Cortez Masto asked Mr. Wright to list the sources of energy he would like to grow. Mr. Wright said our economy is underpinned by oil and gas, coal is a major source, nuclear power is a major source, hydropower is a major source, wind and solar are growing rapidly, and geothermal particularly in states like Nevada are early on but have significant running room to become a major source of power.

Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) said he has enjoyed his conversations with Mr. Wright and that he thinks the report that Liberty Energy did on our abundance of energy resources, the need to take advantage of them, and the fact that growing our energy supply increases GDP per capita, hits it right on the nail. Sen. Cassidy talked about how when we offshore emissions, we end up giving jobs to China. He said that they end up taking on all the production because they don't have the carbon emission standards that we do. He cited how Great Britain is offshoring their carbon intensity but then ends up reshoring it with the products they buy, leading to a false depression in the carbon emissions data. He said that he feels Mr. Wright brings sophistication to this argument that is much needed. He said that one thing he has been supporting is foreign pollution fee where we look at the emissions profile of a US product and then compare it to a competitor like China and put a fee on not complying to the internationally accepted standards. He asked Mr. Wright about his thoughts on that. Mr. Wright said that Senator Cassidy has very creative ways on how to address these issues and he is aligned with the Senators' views. Sen. Cassidy said that he takes it that Mr. Wright would support his foreign pollution fee. The Senator added that one critical role of DOE is to help calculate the embedded emissions. He said that he sees this as a way to outcompete others, helping our domestic manufacturers, because there will be a higher fee on overseas manufacturers. He asked Mr. Wright if he would support this as well. Mr. Wright answered that if he has the privilege of being confirmed, he will look into all these issues. Sen. Cassidy asked him to elaborate on how the American energy market has changed in the global market. Mr. Wright said that in the last 20 years we have gone from the largest importer of natural gas in the world to the largest exporter of natural gas in the world, is phenomenal. He said that we were able to fill most of the gap for Europe from the Russia-Ukraine war, with most of the replacement supply coming from the United States. Sen. Cassidy concluded by saying that he is all about energy abundance as it helps ourselves and our allies.

Sen. John Hickenlooper (D-CO) started by saying that we have so many challenges to address when looking to our energy future. He asked Mr. Wright if they would come up with a comprehensive plan for how to deal with this under his leadership. Mr. Wright answered that there is certainly a possibility of this, and he thinks it is time to not only look

at our energy trajectory, but also other issues including climate change. Sen. Hickenlooper said that Mr. Wright has indicated in the past that climate change is slowly evolving and should not command as much attention as it has. The Senator said despite that, he continues to worry about the acceleration of the process as we see things like rapid melting of ice and increasing salinity of the ocean. He asked Mr. Wright if we should have some contingency plans if climate change accelerates, especially with all the recent natural disasters including the current fires in Los Angeles. Mr. Wright said we absolutely do need more of a plan, and as someone who has studied the evolution of climate change for years, it is a global issue. He said that the solution to climate change is to evolve our energy system. He mentioned the fact that in his career, he has worked in nuclear, geothermal, solar and battery storage technology. He said that while climate change is a global issue, it is our job to stay in front, an opinion in which Mr. Wright said the President-elect is firmly aligned with. Sen. Hickenlooper then mentioned the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, which is primarily based in Colorado, and asked how Mr. Wright would approach funding for this organization. Mr. Wright answered that it is too early for him to answer it, but it is a very important center, and he is very keen to engage on that. Sen. Hickenlooper then asked if Mr. Wright could talk more about how he would protect the landscape while also expanding our electrical grid. Mr. Wright said that our electricity grid is the most pressing issue in the energy space, and it has been going downhill for the past few years. He said we need to bring the costs down and keep the grid stable, expressing his deep concern for the current trajectory.

Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) noted that the DOE classifies nuclear energy as the largest source of clean energy but requires containment and air purification. Senator Hyde-Smith asked Mr. Wright what his view was on the limitations related to containment ventilation issues and new generations of power reactors. Mr. Wright said technology is key for growing our energy abundance. He added that we must figure out how to start up innovation again for nuclear reactors, and said nuclear projects of the past were large, took a decade, and often went over budget. He stated that the next generators are smaller and built in a facility with decreasing cost. Wright also noted that nuclear makes up just under 20% of our electricity, but the largest consumption of energy is high-impact heat which is used to make steel and cement and many other things that nuclear can have a large impact on.

Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) started off by asking her standard two questions for a nominee, the first being if he has made an unwanted request for sexual favors or committed sexual or verbal harassment. The second was if he had ever entered a settlement for misconduct. Mr. Wright answered no to both questions. Senator Hirono noted the wildfires in Maui in 2023 destroyed their power grid and has since received federal assistance to rebuild. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he acknowledges the need to make our power grid more resilient against wildfires. Mr. Wright said we absolutely need to improve our power grid and make it more resilient. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he will continue allocating DOE funds authorized by congress to upgrade states power grids. Mr. Wright said the short answer is yes. Sen. Hirono referenced that the DOE requires that all infrastructure projects under the DOE pay prevailing wages. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he would pay prevailing wages as directed by the infrastructure law. Mr. Wright said he would follow the laws and statues

of the United States. Sen. Hirono referenced a meeting between oil executives and President Trump in which the oil executives said that donating \$1 billion to his campaign would be a deal because of his promises to reverse environmental protections, land lease bans and other protections. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he was in attendance at that meeting. Mr. Wright said he had a dinner with President Trump back in April but would describe the dinner differently. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he thought it was appropriate for Donald Trump to propose such a deal. Mr. Wright said he was at the dinner, and he did not put forth that deal. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he is prepared to give vigorous oversight of DOE loans and contracts even if President Trump pressures him to give better deals to his allies. Mr. Wright said he has followed rigorous ethical business practices his whole life and will continue doing so. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he would continue the export of natural gas to China and other countries at the cost of American's paying more. Mr. Wright said the price of natural gas has gone down as we increase exports and natural gas production. Sen. Hirono asked Mr. Wright if he would keep the America people at top of mind as he evaluates natural gas exports. Mr. Wright said absolutely.

Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND) said that the U.S. has been deploying the greatest and latest technologies in the energy space with strong environmental stewardship, and when we implement the technology, the world follows. He asked Mr. Wright how we can get skeptics to understand that the world as a whole will benefit more, particularly those who are skeptical of fossil fuels, when we are the ones with the leading technology and the best environmental stewardship. Mr. Wright answered that this is tough, and this is a dialogue he has been having for his entire career. He said that as someone who has worked in many different types of energy, people need to understand that there is no "clean" and "dirty" energy. He said we need to welcome all types of energy and recognize that they all come with benefits, but also tradeoffs. Sen. Hoeven said that what Mr. Wright said is very important. He said that we can be leaders in this space, bringing more energy, higher standards of living and more environmental stewardship. He then mentioned clean coal technologies that we have access to, using carbon capture. He asked Mr. Wright if he could commit to working with Congress to talk about carbon capture, not only to address emissions concerns, but also to use it as a resource. He asked Mr. Wright if he would come to North Dakota to see all of the work they are doing on this, particularly with oil and Project Tundra. Mr. Wright answered he absolutely would.

Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA) started by mentioning the devastating wildfires occurring in Los Angeles, which has been the most destructive natural disaster in Los Angeles history. He said that the misinformation that is circulating around these fires is ridiculous, and the reason it has occurred all boils down to an extremely dry season with unusually strong winds. He said that both are a direct result of climate change. He told Mr. Wright that the climate threat is very real to his state, and he was disappointed to come across some social media posts of his that read: "the hype over wildfires is just hype to justify more impoverishment from government policies". Sen. Padilla asked Mr. Wright if he still thought these wildfires were "just hype". Mr. Wright said that it is with great sorrow and fear for him watching what is happening in Los Angeles. Sen. Padilla asked him again if it was just hype. Mr. Wright said that he stood by his comments and Sen. Padilla told him to tell that to the families that have lost everything. Sen. Padilla stated he was very

disappointed with Mr. Wright, especially after reading another social media post he had written that said “burning to death in a fire is pretty grim, but that is not what is happening like the climate zealots would like you to believe”. He asked Mr. Wright if he really thinks that the people who have died in these fires are just figments of our imagination. Mr. Wright said of course not, and Sen. Padilla said he wasn’t sorry for cutting him off because Mr. Wright keeps standing by these posts. He said that during their one-on-one conversation, Mr. Wright claimed to be “science-based” and prided himself on listening to facts, evidence and data as he makes decisions. Sen. Padilla then asked Mr. Wright if he would commit to publishing non-classified DOE research and data for the public. Mr. Wright said of course, because that is what the department is all about. Sen. Padilla said that isn’t something he should even have to ask, but it is a very real possibility that Mr. Wright will be asked by incoming President Trump to not publish or withhold DOE research and studies. Mr. Wright said he would follow the scientific method and the law. Sen. Padilla then moved onto how Mr. Wright told him that he doesn’t think mature industries should receive federal subsidies, including oil and gas, and asked him to elaborate on this. Mr. Wright said that he is a strong advocate for the free-market economy and thinks government should be involved in business as little as possible. Sen. Padilla concluded by stating that he takes that as Mr. Wright will get rid of oil and gas subsidies.

Sen. James Risch (R-ID) As the renaissance of nuclear energy continues at a global scale, the US competes with China, Russia, France in providing other countries with nuclear power plants. He asked Mr. Wright if he could explain his understanding of the importance of having the US in leading the world in the conversion to nuclear energy. Mr. Wright said the United States invented the use of nuclear and said President Trump and himself are aligned on needing the US leading the charge. He added that nuclear energy is only 4% of global energy and has the potential to grow and grow quickly. Sen. Risch

Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) gave Mr. Wright a moment to continue his answer about wildfires that were cut off earlier. Mr. Wright said that seeing people suffering, losing family members, losing their house is heartbreaking and hard to watch. He added that these disasters are what we want to protect people from and make ourselves more resilient. Sen. Barrasso noted a previous response of Mr. Wright’s and acknowledged our reliance on imports to fuel our nuclear reactors. Sen. Barrasso asked Mr. Wright if he would make it a priority to build and secure our nuclear supply chain. Mr. Wright said absolutely, and that it is a significant hole in the US arsenal. He added that we created the technology, yet we import most of it and the little that is made in the US are made from non-American companies. He continued that the US needs to build American nuclear infrastructure – for enrichment, mining, power production, and waste disposal. Sen. Barrasso asked Mr. Wright if he agrees that the waivers that allow the import of Russian enriched uranium should be used in a very limited capacity. Mr. Wright said he would agree, and it is very sad that we have become so dependent on Russia but must approach it in a way that does not shut down nuclear plants. Sen. Barrasso noted that as they stop imports of Russian material, China has begun importing more uranium. Sen. Barrasso asked if he would commit to banning imports from China. Mr. Wright said he would, and said China is another country we should not rely on for enriched uranium. Sen. Barrasso asked Mr. Wright if the DOE will

continue to be a faithful partner in completing nuclear projects. Mr. Wright said he believes it is a key role of the US government and the DOE.

Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) started by thanking Mr. Wright for his strong support of nuclear. Sen. Gallego said that throughout his time in Congress, he has been a big supporter of annual appropriations for small modular reactors and sees great potential in them. However, startup costs, public perception and permitting have made scaling up nuclear energy difficult. Sen. Gallego asked Mr. Wright what steps he will take to improve the development and deployment of small modular reactors. Mr. Wright said he is new to government, so he is not sure which levers he will pull, but he thinks DOE absolutely has a role to develop more nuclear energy. Sen. Gallego asked him what kinds of legislation would be useful from Congress to speed up this process. Mr. Wright cited the ADVANCE Act as a great first step with this. Sen. Gallego then mentioned how much clean energy investment the IRA has brought to Arizona and asked Mr. Wright if he would protect clean energy provisions in the IRA, which have created so many jobs. He also asked how Mr. Wright would ensure that previously authorized IRA funds are efficiently distributed. Mr. Wright said that only Congress can make legislative decisions, but he has the ability to decide where to appropriate certain funding for the DOE. Sen. Gallego then asked Mr. Wright how he would make it easier to build transmission lines. Mr. Wright said that this is certainly something he will work on, and it has been a big part of the Trump campaign.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) started by expressing her enthusiasm towards Mr. Wright and the passion he has for energy. Sen. Murkowski said that having someone before the committee that understands energy from a scientific perspective, an entrepreneurial perspective, an economic perspective and a security perspective is extremely unique and valuable. Sen. Murkowski said that it seems that he brings to the table exactly what they need, especially with his focus on affordability and abundance. She said that while there may be disagreements on some aspects of climate change, there is no doubt it is real, and verified with Mr. Wright that he shared that belief. Mr. Wright answered that he did. Sen. Murkowski said that she believes the solution to climate change is how we evolve our energy system. She said it is about technology. She then asked Mr. Wright where all the arctic-focused offices at the DOE fit into his thinking with how you can use a place like Alaska as a starting point for lowering energy costs, considering it is a place with some of the highest energy costs in the world. Mr. Wright said that he knows many parts of Alaska are very remote and lack the same infrastructure as other places, leading to higher energy costs. He said that the problem some of these remote Alaskan communities have is what you see in other parts of the world, and his vision is to expand on the arctic energy office. Sen. Murkowski said she also wanted to talk about critical minerals, citing it as one of our biggest looming energy security concerns. She said that if we are going to utilize all these new technologies, we are going to need the critical minerals. She said that she hopes this is something he looks at very critically, so we can responsibly access our own resources and avoid getting them from overseas.

Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) stated that during her time on the committee they have debated about many things, but paperwork has not been one of them. She added that transparency is key and getting it in sooner than later. Sen. Cantwell asked Mr. Wright if he

would commit to the agreed upon timeline from DOE to clean up Hanford waste. Mr. Wright said it is critical to finish the job, and that he is firmly committed to DOE's obligation to clean up. Sen. Cantwell asked Mr. Wright if he can uphold our nation's labs as it pertains to AI and quantum. Mr. Wright said PNNL has done fabulous work and cyber security is very important and driving that research forward is critical to the defense and security of our country. Sen. Cantwell asked Mr. Wright if we should begin to think about the supply chain and deployment methods of nuclear fusion energy. Mr. Wright said yes that nuclear fusion is fun new technology that has advanced rapidly in the last 10 years and could come to commercial power in the next decade. Sen. Cantwell notes that DOE has invested \$14 billion in US power grid and many states have grid resilience programs. Sen. Cantwell asked Mr. Wright if he would continue to invest in those programs. Mr. Wright said grid resilience is critical and is one of our most important energy issues.

Sen. David McCormick (R-PA) noted that the east coast is at a huge disadvantage in LNG export when compared to the gulf coast. Sen. McCormick asked Mr. Wright if they can work together to get export terminals online outside south Philadelphia. Mr. Wright said getting more energy infrastructure online is good for America, good for Americans, and good for Pennsylvania. He added that it would be hugely beneficial to have an LNG export on the coast of Pennsylvania. Sen. McCormick stated that he is putting together a Pennsylvania energy and innovation summit to help deliver on President Trump's vision to unleash American energy dominance. Sen. McCormick asked Mr. Wright if he could count on his support. Mr. Wright said he absolutely could count on his support; he added that we want to build a new American AI industry and to lead in that industry. He continued that to build a new industry you need to make sure you have the energy to support it. Sen. McCormick asked if the Trump administration's support for hydrogen development does not disadvantage their development of blue hydrogen. Mr. Wright said it is too early for him to speak about the trade-offs of different technologies. Sen. McCormick stated that one of the major labs of the office of fossil energy is in Pennsylvania. Sen. McCormick asked Mr. Wright how he would revitalize that office and focus on new innovations. Mr. Wright said fossil fuels have powered the world most of his lifetime and will continue to do so. He added that the world has fallen out of fashion with fossil fuels to a point where there is less investment and even less discussion. He stated he does not share those aversions towards fossil fuels and looks forward to expanding all energies. Sen. McCormick has Mr. Wright was energy innovations he is most excited about given the trends he is seeing. Mr. Wright said there are so many, but natural gas has been the biggest driver in reducing Americas greenhouse gas emissions on a per capita basis.

Sen. Angus King (I-ME) started by saying that he believes Mr. Wright has a quite subtle position on climate change. Sen. King said that it is his understanding that Mr. Wright does not deny the existence of climate change and that things like sea level rise are occurring due to increased emissions. Mr. Wright said that absolutely reflects his belief. Sen. King said that like he mentioned before, Mr. Wright's position in climate change is subtle, because he does believe in it but thinks we need to utilize all energy sources to be able to provide for the 6 million people who don't have adequate energy access today. Mr. Wright said that is certainly his view. Sen. King asked Mr. Wright if we should still reduce emissions where we can by using cleaner sources of energy and Mr. Wright answered yes. Mr. Wright said he

supports all energy technologies and anything that can improve human lives. Sen. King added that we need to be careful with how much we continue to rely on fossil fuels because it could severely impact things like the jet stream, which could render places like Great Britain or Scandinavia uninhabitable. Mr. Wright said that he likes to look to the past to see how we can improve in the future, turning towards how technology can improve our energy sources in the future. Sen. King said perhaps 10 years down the line energy technology will have evolved enough to where we will be in a better place. Sen. King then turned to natural gas, asking whether the DOE will consider the effect on domestic natural gas prices on expanding LNG export capacity. Mr. Wright said that nothing is more important than the affordability and access to natural gas for Americans. Sen. King said that he hopes Mr. Wright will research more on “GETs” (Grid Enhancing Technology). He concluded by saying that he looks forward to working with Mr. Wright and that he brings a unique perspective to the position.

Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT) told Mr. Wright that he has an amazing track record and appreciates his thoughtfulness. He said that we need to continue talking about how to increase our capacity as we see how much energy demand is going up. He told Mr. Wright that one of the first things he can do at the DOE is refocusing on pro-baseload energy policies; focusing on things like coal, natural gas, hydropower and nuclear power. He said that he believes that doing this will give us access to a much more reliable energy supply. He asked Mr. Wright if he will promote policies that will expand energy development and ensure that baseload sources of energy are protected. Mr. Wright said that the Senator just summarized his top goal, and this perfectly describes his intentions. Sen. Daines then asked how innovation can be used to drive a reduction in emissions. Mr. Wright said that almost all the biggest emission reductions in our country have come from innovation, most notably with the arrival of low-cost natural gas with the shale revolution. He said that many other countries have put top-down policies and mandates in place that are supposed to reduce emissions, but they just send them away to other parts of the world. He said that the only path to reduce emissions and improve lives is with energy innovation. Sen. Daines said that Montana is becoming a quantum powerhouse, and asked Mr. Wright if he will work with him to bolster quantum technology. Mr. Wright said that himself and the President-elect are very passionate about this area.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) stated that a recent geological survey has found 5-19 million metric tons of lithium in South Arkansas. Sen. Cotton asked Mr. Wright if he will commit to working with his office to develop and access the mineral reserves. Mr. Wright said there is new lithium development technology to get it out of binds, and he agrees that it should be evaluated and if commercially viable developed. Sen. Cotton stated the DOE oversees the national laboratories which are often targets of espionage, he noted that in 2023 8,000 people that were Chinese or Russian out of 40,000 foreign users were granted access. Sen. Cotton suggested that adversarial nations should not be granted access to the labs. Sen. Cotton asked Mr. Wright what steps he will take to ensure that the DOE national labs and other sensitive facilities are not compromised. Mr. Wright said our national labs have transformed our country and will continue to do so. He added that sharing information unknowingly with our foes undermines our security and our economic security. He continued that he is aware of the problem in concept but will work diligently to find

solutions to the problem. Sen. Cotton asked Mr. Wright to give assurances that he will advocate for the NNSA. Mr. Wright said he has significant concerns in that area, our enrichment ability has been diluted over the past few years and our ability to build plutonium pits has gone to zero.

Chairman Lee stated that some of the DOE's appliance standards are of some concern and affect almost all Americans. Chairman Lee asked Mr. Wright how the protection of Americans will be implemented when enforcing the appliance standard. Mr. Wright said he hears the concerns of the appliance standard very often. He added that the current regulation has created new machines that use half the energy but take double the time, cancelling each other out. He added that regulation often can go past what was logical and sensible. Chairman Lee referenced Mr. Wright's bettering human lives where he brings up statistics from the Kenyan ministry of health on respiratory infections and having access to clean electric power helps many of us avoid. Chairman Lee asked Mr. Wright to explain how those relate. Mr. Wright said one of the major energy problems is having access to basic clean power; he added that unfortunately more than 2 billion people still use wood to keep themselves warm and cook food. He added that the interior air pollution kills more than 2 million people per year.

Ranking Member Heinrich said that he approaches energy with four goals: Affordability, reliability, abundance and cleanliness. The Ranking Member said that they have been able to achieve affordability, reliability and cleanliness in New Mexico. He said that when it comes to the grid in New Mexico, carbon free renewables now make up 50% of generation. The Ranking Member then cited a statement that Mr. Wright made about how sources like wind and solar will never leave the single digits. He asked Mr. Wright how he could square those two very different data sets. Mr. Wright said that globally, wind, solar and batteries made up only 2.6% of power generation for the last year of full data, and that his statement was more referring to these sources on a broader scale. The Ranking Member said that clean energy is still very much growing and has a place in increasing our energy supply.

Sen. Murkowski said that she wanted to talk about geothermal energy in her second round of questioning. She said that she wants to hear how Mr. Wright could accelerate the use of geothermal energy in his new role, and how he could make the development process for these projects easier. She also asked if he was excited about geothermal energy in general. Mr. Wright said he loves all kinds of energy, especially geothermal, which is a tremendous energy source. He said that geothermal is an enormous energy source right under our feet. Sen. Murkowski said that she knows that everyone is going to have their list of priorities they'll want him to focus on but wanted to point out that one of her biggest disappointments with the Department of Energy over the years has been their failure to pay any attention to geothermal. She said it has become the "forgotten child" in the energy world, despite all its potential. She then asked Mr. Wright if he would support a loan guarantee for a new Alaska LNG pipeline project, and he responded that he would. Sen. Murkowski added that the IIJA provided significant investment to Alaska and wanted Mr. Wright's assurance that these projects would be able to continue under his leadership. Mr. Wright said that he would love to see it continue.

Sen. Hickenlooper asked Mr. Wright if he had thought through some of the conflict of interest in geothermal with how much he has been a catalyst in scaling it thus far. Mr. Wright said he will sever all ties, including financially of Fervo technology along with all his other ties he has to different energy technologies. Sen. Hickenlooper asked how rapidly we can scale geothermal. Mr. Wright said Fervo is building a 400-megawatt plant in Utah and on such a large scale because there is nearby electrical infrastructure. He added that a limiter in the growth of geothermal is there are not many ways yet to sell the power back to users. Sen. Hickenlooper asked Mr. Wright if he could explain how we deal with nuclear waste. Mr. Wright said with engineering, sensible regulation, and safeguards the nuclear waste problem is one of the easiest problems to tackle. He added that we have been selling nuclear power for 70 years and the waste is cooled and housed on site with very little radiation being given off.

Sen. Hoeven stated that his state has the only dual-function nuclear air force base. He asked Mr. Wright to commit to upgrading the nuclear triad. Mr. Wright said it is foundational to our security and our way of life. Sen. Hoeven asked Mr. Wright if there is anything else he would like to add. Mr. Wright said New Mexico has fantastic solar and wind development. He continued that 10% of Americans got a disconnection notice in the last 12-months, more than 20% of Americans admit struggles to paying their bills he said energy is important to our security but is very important to the quality of life to every American.

Chairman Lee brought the hearing to a close.