



FROM: Kountoupes Denham Carr & Reid

DATE: Wednesday, April 15, 2026

RE: House Appropriations Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Subcommittee Budget Hearing over the U.S. Department of Energy

Topline Summary

- Members of the House Appropriations Energy and Water Development Subcommittee convened to conduct a Budget Hearing over the U.S. Department of Energy with Secretary Chris Wright testifying.
- Republican members broadly supported Secretary Wright's direction at DOE, praising efforts to cut wasteful spending, expand energy production, and streamline permitting through NEPA reform.
- Democratic members questioned whether project cancellations were merit-based or politically motivated, with members citing court findings and admissions from DOE's own lawyers suggesting partisan considerations played a role. Members also criticized the administration's budget for zeroing out the Solar Energy Technology Office, proposing elimination of LIHEAP, and withholding home energy rebate funds, arguing these actions hurt working families.

Members Attending: Chairman Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), Ranking Member Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Full Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID), Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA), Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA), Rep. Frank Mrvan (D-IN), Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV), Rep. Michael Cloud (R-TX), Rep. Scott Franklin (R-FL), Rep. Celeste Maloy (R-UT)

[Live Hearing Link](#)

Meeting called to order by Chairman Fleischmann

Opening Statements

Chairman Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN): I would like to welcome Secretary Chris Wright to the Energy and Water Subcommittee this morning. Secretary Wright, thank you for joining us today to discuss the Fiscal Year 2027 budget request for the Department of Energy.



I would like to take a moment to express my deep appreciation for your continued partnership over the last 14 months. Your commitment to maintaining strong lines of communication has been invaluable, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with you as we develop the Fiscal Year 2027 bill.

Mr. Secretary, the Department has continued at an aggressive pace under the Trump Administration, and the past year has demonstrated the Department's clear commitment to furthering American energy abundance. In the Fiscal Year 2027 budget request, the Administration continues to prioritize expanding domestic energy production, strengthening technological leadership, and enhancing national security—work that is essential to maintaining America's competitiveness.

I am encouraged by the Department's continued focus on critical research areas, including high performance computing, artificial intelligence, quantum information science, nuclear energy, and critical minerals.

In November, President Trump issued an executive order launching the Genesis Mission, an ambitious effort to advance discovery science, enhance our national security, and accelerate new energy technologies through the use of an artificial intelligence platform that brings together the National Labs and industry collaborators and leverages the Department's high-performance computing, quantum systems, and artificial intelligence expertise.

I look forward to hearing more about the Department's plans to further this initiative, while also ensuring that these investments do not come at the expense of DOE's core scientific discovery mission that is essential to American scientific and technological leadership.

As many know, I have long championed an all of the above energy strategy because affordable, abundant energy benefits every American. However, nuclear energy must remain foundational to that strategy.

The Administration has appropriately placed nuclear energy at the forefront of U.S. energy policy, beginning with the 2025 executive orders aimed at accelerating deployment of advanced reactor technologies and expanding domestic nuclear capacity. With the support of this Committee, the Department has taken important steps to support demonstration and pilot projects and to strengthen the domestic fuel cycle, including increasing U.S. enrichment capabilities and supporting efforts to reprocess used nuclear fuel. However, additional federal investment is essential to ensure the timely commercialization of these advanced technologies and to establish a secure and resilient domestic nuclear fuel supply chain. Without sustained and targeted support, the United States risks ceding leadership in nuclear innovation and undermining our long-term energy security.

I am pleased to see that the budget request continues to prioritize funding for our nation's nuclear deterrent, proposing an increase of 29 percent to the National Nuclear Security Administration. The FY27 request continues strong investments in sustaining and modernizing the stockpile,



recapitalizing production infrastructure, and maintaining the scientific tools and workforce to uphold the strength of our nuclear deterrent. Communist China's nuclear buildup, Russia's continued aggression, and the war in the Persian Gulf underscore how rapidly the global security environment is shifting, and our nuclear deterrent remains indispensable to U.S. national defense. At the same time, it is imperative that DOE ensure prudent investments and provide the necessary oversight so that taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly.

Secretary Wright, thank you for being here today. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues to develop a fiscally responsible bill that will strengthen our national security and advance American energy dominance.

Here is a polished and corrected version of your transcript, with grammar, spelling, clarity, and paragraph structure improved while preserving the original content and intent:

Ranking Member Marcy Kaptur (D-CT): Good afternoon, and thank you all for joining us. Chairman Fleischmann, Secretary Wright, thank you for appearing before us today.

Energy security is national security. That has been a guiding principle of this subcommittee for decades, and it has never been more urgent than it is right now. Nearly 50 years ago, as our nation's economy reeled from the first Arab oil embargo, President Carter and our predecessors in Congress created the U.S. Department of Energy. Their vision was clear: America must never again be held hostage by foreign energy suppliers.

Through steadfast bipartisan commitment, our nation has made remarkable progress. U.S. crude oil production has grown from about 9.6 million barrels per day in 1970 to 13.6 million last year. We are now a net petroleum exporter. And yet, somehow, American households are still at the mercy of global energy markets and prices.

Energy bills are doubling, and gas prices have risen by a dollar or more per gallon. Diesel fuel is emptying the pockets of our transport industries. This is a serious problem, especially when it comes to major distribution. When Russia invaded Ukraine, oil prices spiked worldwide. We see it again right now, as President Trump's invasion of Iran has sent energy prices soaring for American consumers.

Since the war began in late February, gas prices have jumped more than a dollar a gallon, with the national average hitting \$4.12. The gasoline price spike in March was the largest single-month increase on record. Families are paying \$10 to \$20 more every time they fill their tanks, and the Energy Information Administration says prices may not return to pre-conflict levels until 2027.

As we have seen repeatedly—when gas prices rose in 1956, 1973, 1978, 1990, and 2008—our nation endures deep economic downturns. How can prices be going up when we are pumping more oil, engines are more efficient, and we have brought on massive natural gas supplies to our energy portfolio? Why now?



Our constituents are enduring the largest global oil supply disruption in history, exceeding that of the Arab oil embargo in the 1970s, which prompted a strong policy response from the United States. We must again rise to the occasion, and I know everyone here cares about that as well.

It is not just gasoline. Electricity prices in my region of Ohio have doubled. Utilities coast to coast have proposed or implemented rate hikes affecting more than 107 million customers. Residential natural gas prices are up 13% since the start of this administration. More than 80 million Americans are struggling to pay their utility bills.

Yet the President's budget eliminates the Weatherization Assistance Program, impacting the wallets of hundreds of thousands of households across our nation. I do not think that is a good idea. Working families in northwestern Ohio, across the Midwest, and in every corner of this country are being squeezed—at the pump and through their electric bills.

The answer to this crisis is not less energy innovation. It is competitive domestic energy markets and innovation in more efficient power production. Fair pricing and energy independence in perpetuity require that we diversify our energy portfolio. No single fuel source, monopoly, conflict, cartel, or region can hold the American economy hostage.

That is exactly what this department was created to do. And I must observe: your department should play no favorites. We need to have our fingers on all the keys. This budget moves in the opposite direction.

The Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation is slashed by \$1.9 billion—a 63% cut. That is shocking. The Weatherization Assistance Program, which helps low-income families reduce their energy bills, is eliminated entirely. I would like to know what the substitute is for that. The Office of Science is cut by \$1.1 billion, and ARPA-E—responsible for generating \$15 billion in private-sector investment from just \$4 billion in federal funding—is nearly cut in half.

These are the foundations of America's future: energy innovation, energy security, and energy affordability. Cutting them while families are paying \$4.00 a gallon for gas is unconscionable.

Further, this budget proposes to cancel and repurpose nearly \$20 billion from Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act programs. This will halt critical U.S. energy modernization in manufacturing industries—industries I represent and that remain vital to America.

At the same time, farmers and agricultural communities are facing a very difficult year due to tariffs and disrupted global markets. Why is the administration delaying approval of year-round E15? Even that is not enough. Roughly half the corn and soybeans produced in my congressional district are dedicated to renewable fuels, and that is true across agricultural America. This is not going to be a good year—we must do more to help our farmers.

The administration has stalled both the Farm Bill and year-round E15 authorization. While the President extended E15 temporarily for summer months, other countries like Brazil have E60



technology, and our nation could reach E30. I do not understand why the administration is hesitating in such a vital energy sector.

Turning to nuclear security, the Chairman and I both support maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. Our world is more dangerous, not less. Russia continues to threaten nuclear escalation, China is rapidly expanding its arsenal, and Iran, North Korea, and other actors pose growing risks.

Your budget requests \$32.8 billion for the NNSA—a 29% increase—driven by a \$7 billion increase for weapons activities. But the NNSA is already managing 28 major construction projects worth more than \$30 billion. The GAO has found that project cost overruns have more than doubled since 2023, rising to \$4.8 billion.

We must be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. We cannot pour more money into these programs without strong oversight and project management reform.

What deeply concerns me is the other side of your ledger: defense nuclear nonproliferation. That funding is essentially flat. In fact, the budget cuts up to 26% from programs that secure nuclear materials and prevent weapons from falling into the wrong hands. The President needs to understand that his budget does exactly that. At a time when nuclear threats are growing, these are the programs we should be strengthening, not cutting.

A strong deterrent and the ability to stop adversaries from acquiring nuclear weapons must go hand in hand. Without both, there is no security.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion: energy prices are rising, our grid is under strain, and the world is becoming more dangerous—particularly in oil-producing regions. This is the moment to invest, not to impose higher costs on American households. This is the moment for disciplined reinvestment.

We must modernize commercial nuclear power plants with accountability and new technology—not blank checks. That is why I was grateful last week, along with the Department of Energy, to announce an award to the Great Lakes region, which already produces one-third of our nation's nuclear power. We must modernize responsibly, with no major mistakes.

Nuclear safety and workforce development are paramount, especially in regions where past mismanagement harmed the reputation of a technology advanced by our outstanding nuclear Navy. This is the moment to strengthen every tool we have—for nuclear safety and to prevent nuclear threats—not to hollow out these programs.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to hearing from the Secretary and to the discussion ahead.



Full Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Ranking Member Kaptur, I also want to thank Secretary Wright for being here today and for answering the committee's questions.

Let me commend Ranking Member Kaptur, Chairman Fleischmann, and the members of this subcommittee for their work on the fiscal year 2026 funding bill. This effort showed that we can come together to forge a bipartisan compromise and pass legislation overwhelmingly.

It is unfortunate that this spirit of cooperation is not reflected in the President's budget request for the Department of Energy. The Trump administration's budget would undo the progress we have made and revert to steep cuts that worsen the cost-of-living crisis facing so many Americans.

The President proposes a 17% cut to non-defense funding across the department. There is no question that, if enacted, this would raise energy costs even higher for American families—who are already dealing with a 40% increase in gas prices, more than a dollar per gallon on average, driven by the President's war with Iran.

Just the other day, the President acknowledged that gas prices are likely to rise further. Instead of taking meaningful steps to reduce costs, this budget makes the situation worse.

It proposes nearly \$2 billion in cuts to the Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation, which promotes energy efficiency, supports clean energy development, and strengthens supply chains—all of which make energy more affordable. Instead, the administration proposes to slash these programs.

They also propose eliminating the Weatherization Assistance Program entirely. This program helps families make energy-efficient improvements to their homes and saves participants nearly \$400 per year on average. Apparently, this administration does not believe families need that savings.

Partisanship is also evident in how the Department has operated over the past year. In October, DOE terminated more than 200 projects totaling over \$7.5 billion in funding—exclusively in states that voted for Vice President Harris in the 2024 election. This appears to be political retaliation, an abuse of power that should concern every member of this committee.

The Department has also carried out staffing reductions recklessly, without considering the consequences. They were forced to rehire personnel after realizing that their removal posed national security risks. It turns out we do need the technical experts who maintain our nuclear arsenal.

This chaos adds to the uncertainty American families are already facing—and they are tired of it. Eliminating programs, blocking funding for political reasons, and weakening the Department's capacity all make Americans' lives harder.



Members of this committee—Democrats and Republicans—have shown we can work together to help the American people. But this budget suggests the administration does not understand the challenges families face.

As we move toward the fiscal year 2027 process, I hope we will firmly reject these cuts to critical programs. Secretary Wright, I look forward to your testimony and to your responses to our questions.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Witnesses

The Honorable Chris Wright, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy

[Testimony](#)

Q&A

Chairman Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN) asked Sec. Wright for an update on the Department of Energy's review of financial assistance awards, initiated in May of the previous year, to eliminate wasteful spending and ensure energy projects benefited American taxpayers and ratepayers. Sec. Wright explained that the review covered more than 2,200 projects and faced delays partly because every Senate-confirmed DOE appointee was filibustered, which he described as unprecedented, meaning key departmental leadership did not arrive until late October. He noted that the team engaged in hundreds of dialogues with applicants, restructured many projects, and ultimately completed the review, with the majority of projects either approved outright or advanced through restructuring. Chairman Fleischmann then asked about the short, medium, and long-term goals of the Genesis Mission and its most impactful examples across the Office of Science and NNSA. Sec. Wright described the Genesis Mission as the third large-scale mobilization of American scientific resources, spanning all 17 national laboratories, universities, and private industry, with the goal of accelerating scientific and engineering innovation in areas including energy, healthcare, nuclear security, and national defense. He highlighted the potential to transform serious diseases such as cancers into manageable conditions, saving millions of lives, and emphasized that the mission was intended to supercharge rather than replace basic science.

Ranking Member Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) questioned Secretary Wright about the Department of Energy's proposal to cancel \$15.2 billion in competitively awarded energy projects under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, asking whether additional terminations were planned, whether cancelled projects could be reconsidered, and how the department was determining which projects to cut, with particular emphasis on manufacturing projects where energy costs affect global competitiveness. Sec. Wright affirmed that reconsideration was fully on the table, noting that the department had already revised some decisions after receiving clarifying feedback from applicants. He defended the cancellations by explaining that many projects lacked viable business plans and would have spent taxpayer money without producing lasting results such as new factories or marketable innovations, but acknowledged that well over 80% of reviewed projects had passed and that the department was willing to make mistakes and re-engage. Ranking Member Kaptur then raised concerns about a GAO report finding that cost overruns on



NNSA's 28 major construction projects had more than doubled to \$4.8 billion, and asked about management reforms and when Congress would receive comprehensive lifecycle cost estimates for plutonium pit production. Sec. Wright acknowledged NNSA's poor management track record over the prior decade or two and described efforts to realign incentives, responsibilities, and empowerment structures to operate more like a business, adding that pit production at Los Alamos had ramped up rapidly and that planning for the second production site at Savannah River would incorporate a critical review of the original facility design for greater efficiency.

Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID) applauded Sec. Wright for achieving his goal of visiting all of the DOE labs throughout the country. He continued to speak about amazing work being done at the Idaho National Lab (INL) including work with micro-reactors and the dome test bed. He added that much of the work is reliant on its unique infrastructure, much of which is aging as the INL has been around for 75 years. Rep. Simpson was thankful for the proposed increase in funding for the INL's infrastructure and asked if Congress can successfully provide funding for the INL's aging infrastructure will DOE make it a priority to address the aging infrastructure. Sec. Wright said they are and stated that our legacy facilities that ushered in the nuclear age both for energy and weapons; he would want nothing more than to accelerate the replacement of that infrastructure. Rep. Simpson noted a letter sent by the Idaho delegation speaking about some of the interagency challenges that are created by DOE not being the sole owner of the land in which a DOE site sits on. Sec. Wright says he agrees and is aware of it and will work with the Department of Interior. Rep. Simpson spoke about the recent incidents that have raised concerns of unauthorized wireless devices and asked what step the Department in taking to detect, prevent, and mitigate unauthorized wireless devices within classified DOE facilities and does the Department have the ability have the ability to detect these devices and how are they reported. Sec. Wright said the risk of cyber threats and even drones over their sites is growing rapidly, and that they are aware of it. He continued that they have efforts to address it and are working on a comprehensive plan to address it and predicts they will see more of it across the government.

Full Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) discussed the cancellation of \$7.5 billion in energy awards during the October shutdown and noted that he had said this was a partial list, and more cancellations were to come in both red and blue states. She continued that now, 7 months later, effectively the only projects that were targeted were only in blue states and highlighted that when challenged in court DOE did not try to deny that a project being in a blue state played into their decision-making process. Ranking Member DeLauro asked that given the Department did not appeal to the court's ruling, will he reverse all remaining blue state cancellations. Sec. Wright said all the 2270 projects they evaluated were not evaluated based on where they were; the award location is just one address as many projects have multi-state implications. Ranking Member DeLauro reiterated that the Department's own lawyers conceded that point and that in January the court did find that cancelling those projects went against the constitution. Ranking Member DeLauro spoke about the efforts being taken by the administration to cut funding to renewable energy projects, drive up gas prices, and make it harder for low-income families to afford energy costs such as proposing the elimination of LIHEAP. Ranking Member DeLauro asked what is the timeline to release the funds for the home



energy, whole house rebates program and for the high efficiency, electric home rebates program. Sec. Wright said in the near future. Ranking Member DeLauro asked what that means. Sec. Wright said that it probably is in the next few weeks. He continued that this is not as black and white as she makes it seem and has worked with the LIHEAP program in the private sector. He added that no administration has focused more on energy affordability than this administration, and stated that the Biden administration spent a massive amount of money to elevate the cost of electricity and gas. He added that they are looking to release market pressures to help drive the costs down. Ranking Member DeLauro said they are seeing gas prices skyrocket, and that this administration chose a war of choice with Iran that is driving costs up and noted that he said strikes against Iran could drive up energy prices. Sec. Wright said since he has arrived, he has spoken to the President about Iran and impacts of striking Iran and stated they are trying to solve a 47-year conflict with a nation that was about to get nuclear weapons. He continued that in the middle of the Biden administration gas prices were a dollar higher with no war.

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA) appreciated the Secretary's comments about maintaining the progress on the Hanford clean-up site. He emphasized the importance of meeting milestones and cleaning up and treating the millions of gallons of waste on the site, pointing out a request in the budget to decrease the funding related to accumulating unobligated balances for partially designated facilities. He asked Sec. Wright to comment on the budget request and if it would in any way decrease the effect of the low activity waste facility. Sec. Wright said it would not at all impact the operations of the Hanford waste facility, emphasizing the importance of moving as fast as possible to clean up the largest legacy waste cleanup project and spoke about reindustrializing some of the land on the sites for next generation nuclear powerplants after cleaning up. Rep. Newhouse clarified that the request for decreased request for funding related to the unobligated balances for partially designed facilities, which would not impact the vitrification plant, which Sec. Wright confirmed. Rep. Newhouse discussed the selection for the next Bonaville power administrator and the need to address issues affecting the region including delays in transmission capacity and the interconnection queue which were important to the area. He asked what Sec. Wright's approach was to ensure that the next administrator was equipped to address these issues. Sec. Wright discussed the scale of the Bonaville power market in the Pacific Northwest and said he had gathered information on who would be the best administrator to manage the scale of the utility.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) discussed high energy costs and gas prices and expressed her disappointment that the budget request did not address these rising costs. She spoke about DOE withholding \$345 million worth of rebate funds from Florida homeowners and asked Sec. Wright when DOE would release the funds. Sec. Wright said he did not have the specific answer but they had been carefully going through the programs to ensure they were eliminating fraud and delivered them straight up. Rep. Wasserman Schultz emphasized the importance of the grants to homeowners struggling to keep up with rising energy costs. Sec. Wright said they had looked carefully at a number of broad based programs that deliver money to consumers for rebates, efficiencies, and upgrades, saying there was an incredible amount of fraud. Rep. Wasserman Schultz refuted that statement, emphasizing that it was a grant program



to lower energy costs and the Secretary was withholding the previously approved funds and asked the Secretary to answer for the record specifically when the funds would be released. She detailed the home efficiency program and high efficiency electric home rebates, stating that in Florida, these were not optional but were how they could live, grow, and survive but the Florida Ag and Consumer Services Department was waiting for the \$345 million to fulfill those rebates. She highlighted two communities in her district that were waiting on grants. Rep. Wasserman Schultz asked Sec. Wright to commit to unlocking the funding for both the Seminole Tribe and the City of Myanmar as Congress appropriated the funds. Sec. Wright said they followed the laws but looked carefully at the grants. Rep. Wasserman Schultz reiterated the importance of the grants and said actions show that the administration did not care about lowering energy costs. She criticized cuts to DOE programs that would invest in more affordable and reliable energy to favor extending coal power plants past their useful lifespan warning that if they gave up on reliable energy, they would cede the market to the Chinese for decades.

Rep. Michael Cloud (R-TX) praised both the committee chairman's leadership and Secretary Wright for the direction and competence he has brought to the DOE. He framed the current administration's energy posture as a correction from the previous administration, expressing appreciation for the current scrutinization of waste and fraud. Rep. Cloud also pushed back on the concept of subsidizing today's consumers' electric bills and appliances through tomorrow's taxpayers, calling it a fundamentally flawed plan. Rep. Cloud then acknowledged Wright's active travel schedule, specifically noting a visit Wright made to Cloud's district in Corpus Christi, Texas, and a presidential visit to highlight the expansion of the nation's largest crude oil export port and its growing LNG export capacity. Rep. Cloud then noted that the time of the hearing, a line of tankers are actively waiting outside Gulf ports to load American energy for export to allied nations, which he framed as evidence of progress. Rep. Cloud then raised a local concern: the Corpus Christi region, which houses enormous energy production and refining infrastructure, is running critically short on water. He flagged this as an issue for the DOE and noted this as an issue for the DOE and noted that multiple agencies and the broader administration are working on it, but he wanted to keep it on Wright's radar. Cloud then pivoted to future competition with China for global dominance. He argued that while AI and economic power are key dimensions, it ultimately comes down to energy production. Rep. Cloud then asked Secretary Wright what the administration is doing to progress new energy projects, particularly concerning regulatory actions, and what Congress can do to help. Secretary Wright responded that every decision is evaluated by whether it will increase energy supply and lower energy prices. He contrasted this with his evaluation of the Biden administration, arguing that despite large DOE spending, not a single project was evaluated using the aforementioned metric. He continued that administration operated on the basis of making energy more expensive while restricting supply, and that the current administration operates opposite of that philosophy. Wright then mentioned a visit he made to a new lithium processing facility, citing it as an example of energy intensive manufacturing the administration is trying to support. Referring to what Congress can do, Wright pointed to NEPA reform, explaining that the National Environmental Policy Act, originally passed to require environmental impact assessments for large projects, had been weaponized over the decades into a tool to block construction entirely. He reinforced that the Trump administration directed every department, including DOE, to rewrite its NEPA procedures in line with original NEPA application. As a result, two-thirds of



entities that previously had to file NEPA applications with DOE no longer need to, and the processes to do so have been streamlined. Wright argued that restoring the ability to build in America is essential to winning the long-term competition with China. He closed by urging Congress to pursue comprehensive permitting reform – including Section 401(c) water permits; to clear the path for businesses to build responsibly and efficiently.

Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA) noted that the DOE has accumulated massive liabilities since the 1990s due to the federal government’s decades-long failure to resolve the back end of the nuclear fuel cycle. He cited the fiscal year 2025 audit of the Nuclear Waste Fund, which put the total liability spent on nuclear fuel at \$56.5 billion, with taxpayers paying over \$3 million per day. Rep. Levin then stated that roughly \$15 billion has been spent on the Yucca Mountain project, meaning the government is on track to spend nearly four times that amount simply because of procedural faults. He continued that he is encouraged by the current administration’s approach of working collaboratively with states, rather than top-down solutions. Rep. Levin then noted a recent DOE RFI inviting states to express interest in hosting a Nuclear Life Cycle Innovation Campus. He then asked Wright for an update on the responses received. Secretary Wright responded enthusiastically, saying the responses had been extraordinary. 28 states responded expressing interest, which Wright framed as a direct result of the administration’s collaborative, opt-in approach. He then contrasted this with the Yucca Mountain model, where Nevada was essentially told it would host the site. Wright described the campuses as potentially becoming full nuclear ecosystems, combining reprocessing, enrichment, fuel, fabrication, and reactor operations; with surrounding expertise, licensing infrastructure, and land all co-located. Sen. Levin then asked whether the Nuclear Waste Policy Act would need to be amended to realize these campuses. Secretary Wright acknowledged he did not have a definitive answer, but that it is possible and that as more clarity emerges, he would like to work closely with the senator. Sen. Levin then raised the question of contractual obligations, specifically, whether the campuses would allow the government to meet its long-standing legal commitments to take possession of spent fuel from permanently shut down reactor sites. He referenced his own San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in Southern CA as a primary example. Wright affirmed the urgency, comparing this issue with the Iranian nuclear situation in one respect: ignoring it does not make it go away. He said he believes the problem is fixable and expressed enthusiasm about working with Levin toward a solution. Sen. Levin then mentioned the bipartisan legislation he is co-sponsoring with Rep. August Pfluger of Texas, the Nuclear Waste Administration Act. He continued it would create a single-purpose, standalone organization dedicated solely to managing spent nuclear fuel. The argument behind it, Levin noted, is that the DOE has too many competing priorities and that a dedicated entity would be better suited to manage this. Sen. Levin then asked for Wright’s thoughts on DOE’s long-term capacity to handle the issue on its own. Secretary Wright loved the question, describing it as a subject for future dialogue as the administration works through the siting and operational details of the innovation campus concept. He did not commit to supporting the legislation but indicated the idea of a dedicated management structure might be a good idea. Sen. Levin closed by personally inviting Wright to stop and visit San Onofre on his next trip through southern CA to visit the site together.

Rep. Scott Franklin (R-FL) asked Sec. Wright to repeat his earlier comment about gas prices. Sec. Wright said gas prices are roughly one dollar cheaper than they were four years ago. Rep.



Franklin asked why gas is so expensive in California. Sec. Wright noted an analysis that said 55% of the price of gasoline in California is the choice of politicians, mentioning specific blends that add to the price. He said California has gone past reasonableness. Rep. Franklin asked why the refineries are leaving. Sec. Wright said two refinery closures this year worry him. He said California has the greatest number of military assets in the country, and it gets over 60% of its oil imported from Iraq through the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Rep. Franklin asked if during this conflict, California is getting the majority of its oil from the Middle East while there could be oil in the United States with different restraints. Sec. Wright said California has made themselves an energy island and he expressed frustration over California's action on energy policy. Rep. Frankling said his colleague from Florida had mentioned her perception that the DOE was slow-rolling nuclear projects, asking Sec. Wright if that was true, given his conversations with members of the nuclear industry earlier today. Sec. Wright said the United States has built two nuclear power plants in the last several decades, and we will have at least 12 under construction under the Trump administration.

Rep. Celeste Maloy (R-UT) expressed interest in discussing permitting reform but deferred to Rep. Cloud's conversation. Rep. Maloy then discussed geothermal energy, noting its importance in Utah. She noted in the budget how geothermal energy is included in the Baseload Power Initiative and moved to the Hydrocarbons and Geothermal Energy Office, asking Sec. Wright how that move will improve coordination with the land management agencies to make sure geothermal resource development is done on public land. Sec. Wright said the DOE moved it because the technology to harness geothermal energy is parallel to the technology used to harness oil and gas, and the same permitting needs to be done. He said there needs to be changes to be able to drill wells and harness geothermal resources on federal lands, something that the Biden administration made it difficult to do. Sec. Wright was excited about the next generation of geothermal and the success that Utah will play. Rep. Maloy asked how the DOE is selecting sites for the EGS Greenfield campaigns. Sec. Wright said the presence of geothermal gradients and drilling conditions are considerations on the technical front. Then he added they need a regulatory environment to operate and do the research in a timely fashion. Sec. Wright said he will not be directly involved in these decisions himself. He also was passionate about commercial partnership and engagement.

Rep. Frank Mrvan (D-IN) noted recent DOE Emergency orders for two Indiana coal plants, one being in his district. Rep. Mrvan noted Sec. Wright's past stated commitment to ensuring Americans get the power they deserve when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing but highlighted constituents in his district that are paying the highest energy prices in the country. Rep. Mrvan noted that the cost to put the coal plant in his district back online would cost around \$100 million and asked Sec. Wright to communicate how forcing this coal plant to stay open benefits those in his district, especially when the cost of restarting the plant and maintaining the plant, which was originally closed by the local utilities, is so significant. Sec. Wright said that reliability studies in northwest Indiana have shown concerning signs, so the risk of blackouts are especially high if additional power is not brought online. Rep. Mrvan asked Sec. Wright how he justifies these rate increases and the price tag of bringing this plant online. Sec. Wright argued that the cost of blackouts is immeasurable. Rep. Mrvan questioned why consistent blackouts haven't been experienced if there are reliability concerns. He noted that natural gas was going to



be more heavily implemented in the region and asked how that would lead to additional blackout risks. Sec. Wright said the 202(c) authorities they have used have always been in dialogue with local utilities. Rep. Mrvan asked Sec. Wright for a direct answer. Sec. Wright was unsure about the exact details but said he would circle back. Rep. Mrvan then noted that the Federal Emergency Regulatory Commission authorized the plant in his district to impose a tariff that would allow them to seek IURC approval to recover costs of complying with federal orders through rate increases. Rep. Mrvan argued that DOE effectively ordered a tariff on his constituents based on their energy policy. Sec. Wright argued that this would be to keep the grid reliable and drive prices down. Sec. Wright said similar claims have been made before and have been proven to be wrong. Rep. Mrvan encouraged DOE to consider the impact of its policies on his constituents and rate payers. Sec. Wright said he would look into this emergency order.

Rep. Susie Lee (D-NV) noted her shared opposition with the President that Yucca Mountain is not used as a waste repository. Sec. Wright said this remains the administration's stance on the matter and said that they would partner with states that want to establish waste repositories. Rep. Lee noted that Nevada leads the U.S. in solar power potential but argued that the DOE budget makes clear that the administration is prioritizing other forms of energy generation such as fossil fuels. Rep. Lee noted the Department of the Interior's decision to require that solar and wind project permits be personally approved by the Secretary and asked Sec. Wright if this type of weaponization of the permit process against energy sources like solar is a step too far. Sec. Wright said he does not care what sources of energy are deployed as long as they are secure, reliable, and affordable. He agreed that Nevada is a very favorable state for solar and agreed that permitting for this energy source in Nevada should be easier. Rep. Lee argued that the Trump administration has not taken an all-of-the-above energy approach and emphasized that the impact of this permitting approval process is debilitating. Rep. Lee asked Sec. Wright if he would help discuss the need of permitting parity with Sec. Burgum. Sec. Wright said he would. Rep. Lee then noted previously asking Sec. Wright for his maintained support of the DOE's Solar Energy Technology Office and highlighted that DOE's 2025 and 2026 budget have requested zeroing out the office entirely. Rep. Lee noted Sec. Wright's past commitments to supporting these efforts and asked him to square his comments with the budget requests. Sec. Wright said DOE would continue its research into solar and argued that this is consistent with their budget requests. Rep. Lee reiterated that the budget request has the office zeroed out again, expressing hope that this could be amended. Sec. Wright said they could continue to discuss this and expressed his support for national labs and the exciting applications for solar being developed.

Chairman Fleischmann asked Sec. Wright to provide a realistic assessment of when the NNSA will achieve the planned 80 plutonium pits per year and what risks will further delay that timeline. Sec. Wright stated that his goal was to get 100 pits produced cumulatively during this administration and move to producing 80 pits per year by 2030 as soon as possible. He emphasized the importance of achieving this goal as quickly as possible to maintain and modernize their stockpile and weapons. He claimed that they would see rapid escalation and improvement of plutonium pit production due to his passionate, business-savvy team.

Ranking Member Kaptur discussed *What Do I Know? I'm Just a Lobbyist* and *Power Corrupts*, two books that detail corruption in the American energy industry. She recommended



those books to attendees so that this type of corruption could be prevented. Ranking Member Kaptur also noted the prevalence of monopolies in the energy field, particularly in her home state of Ohio. She also discussed the difficulties a domestic solar power manufacturer in Ohio faced while attempting to gain capital. She praised this manufacturer's achievements in technology and discussed a mayor in her district who provided power to his small town by buying land for solar technology. Ranking Member Kaptur praised this achievement for lowering energy prices for the mayor's constituents. She argued that this was an example of successful, non-traditional approaches to energy efficiency. She also mentioned the benefits of geothermal energy, and urged Sec. Wright to consider utilizing this power by drawing from water waste and water plants. Ranking Member Kaptur ended by praising innovation in the energy industry.

Rep. Newhouse circled back to his first round of questions on the BPA and the need to hire a new administrator. He emphasized the importance of consultation with regional stakeholders given the unique nature of BPA. Sec. Wright agreed, highlighting how critical BPA is to the economy and its benefit to the community. Rep. Newhouse then discussed Washington's generation of hydropower. He stated that there have been efforts to weaken and remove the dams, discussing recent court action and harm to fish. He asked Sec. Wright to reaffirm the administration's commitment to hydropower. Sec. Wright agreed with Rep. Newhouse's comments and expressed support for investments in dams and hydropower.

Rep. Levin discussed court documents filed by Sec. Wright's lawyers that said DOE grant terminations were impacted by states that tend to elect Democrats. He asked Sec. Wright to elaborate on this. Sec. Wright responded that it is not inconsistent to say these terminations were not political. He noted that projects were evaluated on their merits, but the timing of the announcements were impacted by a state's politics. Rep. Levin disagreed, saying that his lawyer argued that consideration of partisan politics is not unconstitutional. He asked how Sec. Wright accounts for the fact that all terminated grants were based in states that did not vote for President Trump. Sec. Wright responded that this was a timing question, not a decision question. Rep. Levin reiterated his question. Sec. Wright reiterated this this was in regard to the announcement of the decisions, not the decisions themselves. Rep. Levin cited OMB Director Vought and President Trump's statements as evidence that these decisions were political. Sec. Wright stated decisions were made on merits, rather than on politics. Rep. Levin asked if Sec. Wright would commit to full cooperation with the audit of these decisions and Sec. Wright said yes. Rep. Levin asked if he would be open to reconsidering some of these terminations and Sec. Wright said yes, noting these conversations are ongoing. Rep. Levin discussed the ARCHES program and asked Sec. Wright to engage on this program and Sec. Wright said yes.

Rep. Cloud pushed back on colleagues who characterized all canceled energy projects as being in Democratic-leaning states, noting he had a list of canceled projects in his home state of Texas in front of him. He argued that some cancellations were necessary and framed increased energy production investment as critical to supporting data centers and competing with China in AI development. Rep. Cloud also criticized carbon capture as a wasteful use of funds, characterizing it as energy-intensive, cost-raising, and non-generative. He then asked Sec. Wright about the Energy Dominance Finance Program and whether additional congressional support was needed to finance new nuclear reactors. Sec. Wright said the department was actively engaged with



nuclear industry partners and was eager to deploy the EDF program as an initial financing mechanism before transitioning reliance to private lenders. He indicated that loan announcements could be expected within the next 12 months.

Rep. Lee raised concerns about sustained funding for several key projects at the Nevada National Security Site, including the U1A Complex Enhancements Project, the Zeus Test Bed Facility Infrastructure Project, and a new access shaft, warning that funding disruptions could compromise the stockpile stewardship mission. She also expressed concern about uncertainty surrounding how funds from the reconciliation bill were being allocated across the nuclear security enterprise, noting that allocations had shifted significantly and that NNSS ultimately received about \$217 million less than what was in the president's budget request. Secretary Wright affirmed the critical importance of NNSS to the nation's nuclear stockpile program and committed to working with Rep. Lee and the NNSA team to ensure those projects remain on track through current and future funding mechanisms. Rep. Lee then raised concerns about declining water levels at Lake Powell, warning that the reservoir could fall to deadpool by December 2026 and threaten hydropower supplies for millions of Americans across seven states. Sec. Wright agreed the situation was serious, noting that water allocations under the Colorado River Compact were set during an unusually wet period when the region supported far fewer people than it does today, and acknowledged that resolving interstate allocation disputes was an urgent priority.

Rep. Maloy spoke about Utah being home to the only fully licensed uranium mill, along with several other uranium mine projects. She continued that Congress funded the strategic uranium reserve in 2020, in which funding has been inconsistent. Rep. Maloy asked what role he sees these assets playing in rebuilding the secure and domestic nuclear fuel cycle to meet the needs for energy production and national security. Sec. Wright said it is very important and that his first few months in office he has met with several of the uranium miners in the United States, including former uranium miners that they want to get started again. He continued that we need to continue mining, milling, and enriching in Utah and this country and believes it will be a booming industry in five years' time.

Ranking Member Kaptur discussed the grassroots, public opposition of AI and stated that we need to find a way to communicate at the local level about what the implications of this are. She urged the Secretary to think about some type of mechanism they could create, possibly working with HUD, to repurpose old industrial facilities. She added that Data centers are taking space so quickly that it is building the opposition sentiment against AI, and that it is important to find a power package that doesn't over power the grid, but the zoning about where this should go goes beyond the local people. Sec. Wright said they announced a little while ago in Portsmouth, Ohio to use an old industrial facility to build a data center and agree with her there. He continued that the risk she pointed out is very real, that the opposition to AI is growing, particularly in rural America. He highlighted the ratepayer protection pledge that forces developers of data centers need to bring money upfront to communities, and sign agreements that stop the rise of power prices and invest in local communities. Sec. Wright said the real deals are big wins, but we don't talk about them well and don't advertise them.



The hearing was adjourned.