

**Opening Statement**  
**Sen. Lisa Murkowski**  
**Hearing on Nuclear Waste Administration Act**  
**July 30, 2013**

Mr. Chairman, the four co-sponsors of S. 1240, the Nuclear Waste Administration Act, have spent a good amount of time working on this legislation. That we were able to reach a consensus on the language and have this hearing so quickly is a credit to your leadership on this issue.

We know there are certain segments that aren't universally supported, and some areas that were not addressed to everyone's satisfaction. What we have tried to do, however, is put forward legislation that can get us from where we are today on the back-end of the nuclear fuel cycle – namely a process that has mastered the art of going nowhere slowly – to a place where actual progress has been made.

Where spent nuclear fuel is deposited into permanent repositories. Where the American taxpayer is no longer liable for the Government's breach of contract – a breach that has cost nearly \$3 billion so far and is likely to grow upward of \$20 billion if the Government fails to accept used fuel by 2020 and, by some estimates, may increase by as much as \$500 million each year thereafter if no action is taken.

One of the areas of significant discussion centered on the structure of the new entity. Should it be led by a single Administrator – a person who essentially calls the shots and is the person to go to if things are or aren't working – or a Board of Directors as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission? Either approach can work. Either could fail. We choose the single Administrator structure, with an enhanced Oversight Board, as a way to streamline the process and get the casks moving.

We have essentially written in a ten-year window for this new entity to show real results. It is an aggressive timeline, but it is doable and I believe it sends an important message to the American people, to industry, and to all who follow nuclear issues. We are not willing to wait another 30-plus years to resolve the back end of the nuclear fuel cycle.

As the Committee considers the approach that we have offered, I would like to touch on an area that I believe we will need to address more comprehensively during the Committee process and that is the transportation of waste in dry cask storage to a storage facility or repository.

According to the NEI, more than 3,000 shipments of used nuclear fuel have been made over the past 40 years by rail, truck, and sometimes barge. While there are a handful of transport containers certified by the NRC, there are nearly 1,700 dry cask units at operating reactors, and stranded and shut-down sites, representing over 19,000 metric tons of used nuclear fuel, however, no transport containers have been procured for those units, in large part because they have nowhere to go.

But even if we were to pass this legislation tomorrow, significant work needs to be done at the stranded sites – the priority sites identified in this bill – just to get the storage casks to a railhead. DOE's Office of Fuel Cycle Technology estimates that it will likely take 12-15 years to remove the waste from the stranded sites, with the first 5-6 years needed to acquire resources and prepare the infrastructure.

I would be interested in hearing our witnesses' thoughts on the need to address this matter within this legislation.