U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
January 15, 2025 Hearing: *The Wright Nomination*
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Christopher A. Wright

Questions from Chairman Mike Lee

Question 1: A December 2024 report from the Daily Caller exposed that the U.S. government has awarded sensitive research grants to scientists affiliated with Chinese Communist Party talent programs. This included funding for research conducted at our national laboratories—facilities overseen by the Department of Energy that are at the core of our national security and technological innovation. In fiscal year 2023, thousands of Chinese nationals were granted access to Department of Energy national laboratories.

If confirmed as Secretary of Energy, what specific steps will you take to:

- Identify and mitigate the oversight failures that allowed scientists affiliated with foreign talent recruitment programs to obtain access to our national laboratories?
- Strengthen DOE's vetting process for foreign nationals to prevent further exploitation by foreign adversaries?

Response: Protecting U.S. innovation and intellectual property is essential for national security and economic competitiveness. I intend to be fully briefed on this upon confirmation by DOE officials and determine any additional steps that should be taken to ensure necessary protections are in place related to foreign talent recruitment, proper vetting and awarding of sensitive grants, and access to national laboratories given mounting global threats meant to undermine our great nation.

Question 2: The Biden administration required "Community Benefits Plans" for the billions of dollars of awards it issued. These plans could require discrimination and other actions of dubious legality.

- Will you review the requirements DOE has imposed in recent years and included in its awards to ensure the federal government is not funding or requiring actions that could result in discrimination? This is especially true of awards to Universities which could violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Response: Yes, I intend to direct a full review of DOE requirements imposed in recent years for DOE issued awards to ensure the federal government is not funding or requiring actions that could result in discrimination. I appreciate you bringing this to my attention and I look forward to working with you on this and other issues.

Question 3: Over the past few months, I have met with numerous electric utilities. The overarching theme in those meetings is the challenge of meeting the demand for electricity, which is growing faster now than it has in decades. In the near future, our country could potentially see dozens of gigawatts of demand growth, largely from data centers and manufacturing. Building energy infrastructure take years and sometimes decades. What role can and should DOE play to help meet this demand while keeping the grid reliable, affordable, and secure?

Response: President Trump is committed to lowering energy costs and that means prioritizing cutting red tape, enabling private sector investments, and building the infrastructure America needs to make energy more affordable for families and businesses. This is an essential duty and objective for the Department of Energy and through my work as Secretary of Energy, if confirmed, and as a member of the National Energy Council, I will be an unabashed steward for all sources of affordable, reliable and secure American energy and the infrastructure needed to develop, deliver and secure them.

Questions from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: The strength of our National Labs lies in the diversity of their science and engineering programs. Even at nuclear weapons facilities like Los Alamos, a key factor in attracting and retaining top talent is the opportunity for scientists to collaborate with leading experts across a wide range of fields. Do I have your commitment that you will not reduce research capabilities and staffing for open science at our DOE National Labs?

Response: Open science is an important part of technological and scientific innovation and I am committed to supporting the missions and expertise of DOE National laboratories.

Question 2: Artificial intelligence will radically change the nature of national security science and engineering by accelerating the rate at which scientific discoveries are made and by broadening access to knowledge that was previously only available to a few experts. If confirmed, how will you build on DOE's proposal, known as the Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence for Science, Security and Technology or FASST initiative to ensure that our National Labs help us lead the world in AI for science and national defense?

Response: Artificial intelligence is changing the face of industries, leading to scientific breakthroughs and a host of other societal advancements. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the FASST initiative and identifying other ways to support our national laboratories in leading the world in AI for science and national security.

Question 3: New Mexico's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP, is essential to our Nation's nuclear cleanup liability. I was pleased to see all affected parties were able to successfully negotiate a settlement agreement with DOE on the facility's next ten-year permit term. The agreement includes improved safeguards and oversight as well as prioritization for legacy defense waste from places like the Los Alamos National Labs. Do I have your commitment that you will follow through on the terms of this agreement?

Response: I look forward to visiting the Waste Isolation Pilot Plan and New Mexico's leading national laboratories with you in the year ahead. I intend to review the terms of the settlement agreement upon confirmation. Improved safeguards and oversight are important for all DOE facilities, including WIPP, and I will prioritize them.

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Question 4: The GAO and National Academies have reported that the cleanup mission could be accelerated and save on costs in the long run if larger investments in R&D on innovative cleanup technologies were made in the near term. Despite these findings, annual investments in R&D have steadily declined to only tens of millions of dollars over the years. Do you think the U.S. government should be investing more in cleanup R&D?

Response: Investments in research to accelerate and lessen America's legacy waste is important and I will do my best to balance this research against other departmental objectives.

Question 5: Many U.S.-based cloud computing companies are eager to build their new data centers abroad due to easier access to fossil energy generation and the ability to build more quickly. What is your plan for incentivizing these companies to build more of these data centers in the U.S. and have them be powered by as much clean energy as possible?

Response: Access to affordable, reliable, and secure energy is essential criteria in attracting and powering data center investment in America. I will work to implement President Trump's important energy agenda to unleash American energy to spur private sector investment and drive U.S. innovation.

Question 6: Over its history, the Department of Energy has funded research, development, and deployment with the private sector that has led to significant breakthroughs in energy technology, made loan guarantees to support innovative energy technologies, and participated in public-private partnerships on energy demonstration projects. These initiatives are critical to our continued global competitiveness and energy security. Will you continue to execute the existing contractual agreements DOE has in place with the private sector?

Response: U.S. global competitiveness and energy security are top priorities of mine and of President Trump and the incoming administration. I will keep these priorities and perspectives in mind on balancing funding priorities that lead to scientific breakthroughs with the other departmental and Administration priorities.

Question 7: This week, NASA confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record. Earlier this year, Hurricane Helene killed 104 Americans in many areas thought to be safe from hurricanes. There were 27 individual weather and climate disasters this year with at least $1 billion in damages. This summer, Phoenix, AZ experienced more than 100 days above 100 degrees. And the wildfires in California are ongoing, where the Palisades fire is larger than 23,000 acres and only 17% contained and dozens have been killed. While I'm glad to hear that you've previously recognized the presence of climate change, I am concerned by your view that the federal government should do nothing to address climate change.

- Do you believe the federal government should play a role in avoiding or mitigating the impact of these climate events?
- If no, who should be responsible for the cost and damage?
- If yes, what role can the Department of Energy play?

- How would you leverage existing expertise in the agency to make energy access more reliable and to allow families and communities to recover more quickly from the rising frequency of natural disasters that damage the grid and cause blackouts?

Response: These are global challenges that we can and should address. They require relentless innovation driven by cutting edge research from DOE National laboratories and private sector research. My life's passion has been bettering human lives, and I've spent my entire career focused on access to energy sources to lift people out of poverty. If confirmed as Secretary of Energy, I will continue that work to support unlocking all U.S. energy resources that meet criteria as affordable, reliable, and secure for all Americans.

Question 8: According to the First Street Foundation, about 35.6 million properties, or a quarter of all U.S. real estate, are facing higher insurance costs and lower coverage as a result of climate risk. Moreover, as climate change worsens, more than 1.9 million home insurance contracts have been dropped since 2018 in states across the country, like Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and New Mexico. Families and businesses now face not only soaring insurance costs, but finding coverage can be difficult or impossible.

- Do you acknowledge that climate change is making natural disasters, like hurricanes and fires, more frequent, intense, and catastrophic?
- With the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change, and the consequent rise in home insurance premiums and companies dropping customers every day, do you think the Department should do anything to help avoid or mitigate these impacts to families?
- Rising insurance rates piled on rising electricity costs can break families' budgets. Is there anything you hope to do, as Secretary of Energy, to reduce the financial burden of these rising costs on American families?
- Do you believe rescinding funding from programs, like DOE's Home Energy Rebate Programs, would help families with rising costs make ends meet?

Response: The most important factor regarding extreme weather is the impact that it has on human lives. Wealthier societies with abundant access to affordable energy are far safer places to live than they were a century ago. A large majority of deaths from extreme weather are concentrated in poorer nations with high rates of energy poverty. Spreading energy access to those currently in energy poverty is the key to further driving down deaths from extreme weather. President Trump is committed to driving down the cost of energy and, if confirmed, I intend to evaluate the DOE Home Energy Rebate Program and other DOE efforts focused on supporting American families and businesses.

Question 9: The U.S. insurance sector held $536 billion in fossil fuel related assets in 2019. Greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels are exacerbating climate change, causing more frequent and more severe extreme weather events. That means insurance companies are exacerbating the risks to their own investments. They are also refusing to underwrite policies for homes whose risk from wildfires and hurricane catastrophe has increased.

- As Secretary of Energy, would you encourage insurance companies to diversify their investments and invest in other energy sources that do not exacerbate climate change, like those that the Department of Energy has long supported through grants and financing?

Response: While this is not generally the purview of the U.S. Department of Energy, I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on this issue with me and I will take them into account if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 10: In pushing for increased fossil fuel production, you've argued that the benefits of energy access outweigh the impact of climate change. You've said that increased energy production is critical for American prosperity. However, fossil fuels contribute to climate change, leading to extreme weather events. These events, combined with insurance companies abandoning them, leaves Americans exposed to financial hardships trying to protect their homes – often their largest asset.

- Given these challenges, do you think the Department should continue supporting efforts to accelerate the 2,600 gigawatts of batteries and mostly clean generation rather than helping produce more fossil fuels?

Response: I have been an investor and partner with companies in sodium-ion battery technology for decades. My view is that the world needs more energy, achieving this requires contributions from all viable energy technologies. I will review the Department's efforts to support and accelerate battery technology and other energy generation.

Question 11: Do you agree that climate-related financial risks—such as rising costs of natural disasters and withdrawing insurers from high-risk markets—amplify traditional risks like credit, market, and liquidity risks which will impact new energy development?

Response: The greatest obstacles to new energy development are lack of infrastructure, lack of the ability to build infrastructure as well as regulatory uncertainty. President Trump is committed to unleashing American energy, cutting the cost of energy and securing energy independence.

Question 12: Given the increasing challenges in the home insurance market due to climate change, would you support federal initiatives to stabilize insurance availability and affordability, such as the creation of Housing Resilience Agencies or other public-private partnerships? What specific policies would you propose to address this crisis?

Response: While this is not generally the purview of the U.S. Department of Energy, I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on this issue with me and I will take them into account if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 13: With climate-related disasters threatening the financial viability of insurance providers and raising costs for homeowners, how would you ensure that federal and state deregulatory actions do not exacerbate these vulnerabilities? What role do you see the Treasury and other financial regulators playing in fostering climate resilience in the insurance sector and beyond?

Response: While this too is not generally the purview of the U.S. Department of Energy, I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on this issue with me and I will take them into account if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 14: You said to me at your confirmation hearing that "Globally... in 2023, the last year we have full data, wind, solar, and batteries were 2.6% of global primary energy. In the U.S., they're a little more than 3%, but not wildly higher than the global."

However, consulting the Energy Institute (formerly the BP Statistical Review of World Energy)'s data, it appears that the actual numbers for 2023 are 6.0% (world) and 6.6% (U.S.) for share of primary energy production from wind and solar.[1]

On this same topic, at a speech at Hart Energy given in November,[2] you said: "You hear the number 4[%] and 5[%] all the time in the press, and even from the EIA. What's the difference between my number and their number? The difference is mine is right and theirs is wrong. And the EIA does this funny trick. They take the energy produced from wind and solar, and then they multiply it by two and a half. Well, if you multiply something by two and a half, you make it a lot bigger. You turn 2% into 5%. But it's shameful."

I find this worrisome, given the role you would have overseeing the EIA if confirmed. I understand you to be saying in effect that for fossil fuels we should count the energy embedded within the fuel (some of which is invariably wasted as heat in most practical applications), but for nuclear and renewables we should count only the power in the form of electricity at the output of a plant. Only by comparing inputs to outputs in this fashion can you get a number like 2.6% rather than the Energy Institute's 6.0% number. Your approach would seem to me to systematically undercount the contribution of nuclear and renewable energy to our economy.

I want to pose a simple example to you: suppose a simplified version of the U.S. economy consumed just 2 TWh energy—for the sake of this example in the form of electricity. And suppose that 1 TWh came from a coal plant with 40% thermal efficiency and 1 TWh from a solar farm.

In this simple example (2 TWh of electricity; 1 from solar, 1 from coal), what percentage of U.S. energy would you say came from coal and what percentage from solar?

If your answer is "50% apiece," can you explain how to square that with the numbers you cited at our hearing and your remarks at Hart Energy? If your answer is not "50% apiece," can you explain what you see as the advantages of an accounting system that produces such counterintuitive results?

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[1] https://ourworldindata.org/explorers/energy?tab=chart&Total+or+Breakdown=Select+a+source&Energy+or+Electricity=Primary+energy&Metric=Share+of+total&Select+a+source=Solar+and+wind&country=USA~OWID_WRL

[2] https://www.hartenergy.com/exclusives/us-energy-secretary-nominee-chris-wright-champions-energy-dug-gas-211134

Response: Senator, thank you for raising this important technical issue. The short answer is - it's complicated. The longer answer is best discussed in person with you and your staff. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my thinking on these issues with you during our next meeting and also hear your perspectives.

Question 15: With electricity demand now projected to increase a staggering 128 GW over the next five years due to AI, a welcome resurgence of domestic manufacturing and other factors, it's clear we're going to need a lot more electrons – as well as a power grid capable of delivering those electrons from where they're produced to where they're consumed. With that in mind, can you speak to your support for building out and modernizing our electric grid – and what steps you think we need to take to meet the urgency of this challenge?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and protecting the electricity grid and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. I am evaluating steps to meet the urgency of this challenge and I look forward to sharing more analysis and insight with you and hearing from you in the months ahead if confirmed.

Question 16: The United States private sector is lagging in financing innovative energy solutions. Are you committed, if confirmed, to using the creative financing mechanisms that Congress gave the Department, such as its loan authority, to derisk energy innovations and effectively catalyze private sector investment to bring these solutions to market?

Response: Energy and scientific investments are critical to the Department of Energy's mission. I intend to evaluate DOE programs and other mechanisms to spur energy innovation and private sector investments.

Question 17: The Department of Energy's Loan Programs Office (LPO) recently made its first conditional commitment under the Tribal Energy Financing Program (TEFP) for a solar microgrid on Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Indians lands. If confirmed, will you ensure that the LPO issues more Tribal Energy Loan Guarantees to help Tribes increase energy development on their lands?

Response: I appreciate the insight you shared with me when we met about the Department's loan guarantee program. I intend to evaluate its efforts to date and all mechanisms to spur energy innovation and private sector investments. Continued Federal engagement with Tribes is important.

Question 18: DOE is the largest federal sponsor of basic research in the physical sciences. DOE's world-leading research in the physical, chemical, biological, environmental, and computational sciences contributes fundamental scientific discoveries and technological solutions that support the nation's primacy in science and innovation, i.e., global competitiveness.

- Can you speak to the contributions of clean energy technologies to securing America's energy security and global competitiveness, as is evident through creating

jobs, bolstering domestic manufacturing, and leading to the development of innovative technologies?

- Can you commit to this Committee that as Secretary of DOE that you will not undermine clean energy research, development, demonstration and deployment activities; and will support DOE's "all of the above" energy strategy?
- Can you commit to this Committee that you will not slow or hinder the work of DOE scientists and other employees, including refraining from suppressing climate and related science research and public communications such as reports? \

Response: I am quite passionate about energy innovation and have been my entire life. The company I founded is an investor and partner with companies in next-generation geothermal energy, small modular nuclear reactors, and sodium-ion battery technology. A thriving society must be energized by affordable, reliable, and secure technologies. While in modern history and for the foreseeable future hydrocarbons have been and are essential to this goal, innovation and scientific breakthroughs in energy research abound and DOE has an important role in fostering this innovation as well as accelerating breakthroughs that benefit America and the rest of the world.

Question 19: One of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) primary forums for assisting state and local governments in implementing cost-effective and productive energy systems for American homes, communities, businesses, and industries is the Office of State and Community Energy Programs (SCEP). Established in 2022 through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, SCEP extends the capacity and capabilities of states, tribes, local governments, schools, and community-serving organizations to instill high-impact, self-sustaining clean energy initiatives focusing on low-income and disadvantaged communities. This is accomplished through managing and overseeing formula grants, competitive grant awards, consumer rebate grants, and technical assistance.

- Programs like the DOE Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), housed within SCEP, have made significant progress in reducing energy costs for low-moderate income households by providing cost-effective building shell improvements such as insulation and air sealing; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; lighting; and appliances. Home weatherization has several other major benefits beyond making homes more energy efficient. For example, they also support household health and quality of living by improving indoor air quality, improving safety by removing energy-related hazards like carbon monoxide leaks, creating stable jobs in the local community, and lowering household carbon emissions.
- Do you agree that we should utilize every tool in our toolbox to help everyday Americans lower their energy bills – including through WAP investments designed to improve energy affordability?
- Can you assure this Committee that under your leadership, DOE will not slow or hinder access to WAP and other SECP assistance programs designed to aid Americans save money on energy, especially those living in rural, Tribal, energy transition, and other disadvantaged communities?

Response: I look forward to learning more about the Office of State and Community Energy Programs and the Weatherization Assistance Program at the Department. President Trump has set an ambitious goal to lower American energy costs, and I intend to evaluate all tools across the Department to meet this objective. All communities must be reached with this important objective.

Question 20: Do you agree that climate-related financial risks—such as rising costs of natural disasters and withdrawing insurers from high-risk markets—amplify traditional risks like credit, market, and liquidity risks which will impact new energy development?

Response: The greatest impact today to new energy development is a lack of access to affordable, reliable, and secure energy and necessary infrastructure. Companies evaluate and report risk today in their annual disclosures.

Question 21: Given the increasing challenges in the home insurance market due to climate change, would you support federal initiatives to stabilize insurance availability and affordability, such as the creation of Housing Resilience Agencies or other public-private partnerships? What specific policies would you propose to address this crisis?

Response: While this is not generally the purview of the U.S. Department of Energy, I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on this issue with me and I will take them into account if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 22: With climate-related disasters threatening the financial viability of insurance providers and raising costs for homeowners, how would you ensure that federal and state deregulatory actions do not exacerbate these vulnerabilities? What role do you see the Treasury and other financial regulators playing in fostering climate resilience in the insurance sector and beyond?

Response: While this too is not generally the purview of the U.S. Department of Energy, I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on this issue with me and I will take them into account if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 23: This week, NASA confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record. Earlier this year, Hurricane Helene killed 104 Americans in many areas thought to be safe from hurricanes. There were 27 individual weather and climate disasters this year with at least $1 billion in damages. This summer, Phoenix, AZ experienced more than 100 days above 100 degrees. And the wildfires in California are ongoing, where the Palisades fire is larger than 23,000 acres and only 17% contained and dozens have been killed. While I'm glad to hear that you've previously recognized the presence of climate change, I am concerned by your view that the federal government should do nothing to address climate change.

- Do you believe the federal government should play a role in avoiding or mitigating the impact of these climate events?
- If no, who should be responsible for the cost and damage?
- If yes, what role can the Department of Energy play?

- How would you leverage existing expertise in the agency to make energy access more reliable and to allow families and communities to recover more quickly from the rising frequency of natural disasters that damage the grid and cause blackouts?

Response: Climate change is a real and global challenge that we can and should address. It requires relentless innovation driven by cutting edge research from DOE National laboratories and private sector research. My life's passion has been bettering human lives, and I've spent my entire career focused on energy sources to lift people out of poverty, and I'll continue that work if confirmed as Secretary of Energy to support unlocking all U.S. energy resources that meet criteria as affordable, reliable and secure for all Americans.

Question 24: According to the First Street Foundation, about 35.6 million properties, or a quarter of all U.S. real estate, are facing higher insurance costs and lower coverage as a result of climate risk. Moreover, as climate change worsens, more than 1.9 million home insurance contracts have been dropped since 2018 in states across the country, like Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and New Mexico. Families and businesses now face not only soaring insurance costs, but finding coverage can be difficult or impossible.

- Do you acknowledge that climate change is making natural disasters, like hurricanes and fires, more frequent, intense, and catastrophic?
- With the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change, and the consequent rise in home insurance premiums and companies dropping customers every day, do you think the Department should do anything to help avoid or mitigate these impacts to families?
- Rising insurance rates piled on rising electricity costs can break families' budgets. Is there anything you hope to do, as Secretary of Energy, to reduce the financial burden of these rising costs on American families?
- Do you believe rescinding funding from programs, like DOE's Home Energy Rebate Programs, would help families with rising costs make ends meet?

Response: The most important factor regarding extreme weather is the impact that it has on human lives. Wealthier societies with abundant access to affordable energy are far safer places to live than they were a century ago. A large majority of deaths from extreme weather are concentrated in poorer nations with high rates of energy poverty. Spreading energy access to those currently in energy poverty is the key to further driving down deaths from extreme weather. President Trump is committed to driving down the cost of energy and, if confirmed, I intend to evaluate the DOE Home Energy Rebate Program and other DOE efforts focused on supporting American families and businesses.

Question 25: The U.S. insurance sector held $536 billion in fossil fuel related assets in 2019. Greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels are exacerbating climate change, causing more frequent and more severe extreme weather events. That means insurance companies are exacerbating the risks to their own investments. They are also refusing to underwrite policies for homes whose risk from wildfires and hurricane catastrophe has increased.

- As Secretary of Energy, would you encourage insurance companies to diversify their investments and invest in other energy sources that do not exacerbate climate change, like those that the Department of Energy has long supported through grants and financing?

Response: While this is not generally the purview of the U.S. Department of Energy, I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on this issue with me and I will take them into account if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 26: In pushing for increased fossil fuel production, you've argued that the benefits of energy access outweigh the impact of climate change. You've said that increased energy production is critical for American prosperity. However, fossil fuels contribute to climate change, leading to extreme weather events. These events, combined with insurance companies abandoning them, leaves Americans exposed to financial hardships trying to protect their homes – often their largest asset.

- Given these challenges, do you think the Department should continue supporting efforts to accelerate the 2,600 gigawatts of batteries and mostly clean generation rather than helping produce more fossil fuels? partner with companies in sodium-ion battery technology for decades.

Response: My view is that the world needs more energy, better energy and achieving this requires contributions from all viable energy technologies. I will review the Department's efforts to support and accelerate battery technology and other energy generation.

Question 27: While the federal government has substantially invested in the commercialization of novel energy technologies, there are some solutions like fusion that are undervalued and underinvested in by the U.S. The US stands to lose its lead in fusion energy in the race against China who is currently investing $1-1.5 billion annually. The U.S. spends $800 million annually on its fusion program but less than half of that is dedicated toward commercialization. If confirmed, how will you work to ensure that DOE moves additional money into commercializing fusion so that the U.S. is the first country to realize the benefits of fusion power?

Response: I intend to evaluate fusion technologies and related work underway at the Department of Energy in its innovation and commercialization if confirmed.

Question 28: It is clear that the development of emerging technologies, like artificial intelligence, can unlock groundbreaking advancements for public health, energy security, national defense, and our economy. Whoever leads in the development of emerging technologies will gain a significant edge in driving broader scientific and technological innovation. Our adversaries, such as China, have publicly pledged to invest tens of billions of dollars in emerging technology research and development.

- Do you believe the United States should increase their investment in emerging technology research and development? What role should the Department of Energy play in the development of these technologies?

Response: Artificial intelligence is changing the face of industries, leading to scientific breakthroughs and a host of other societal advancements. If confirmed, I look forward to identifying ways to support our national laboratories in leading the world in emerging technology research and energy innovation.

Question 29: The DOE and the Labs are uniquely positioned to carry out work in detecting and mitigating emerging technological threats related to biotechnologies and nuclear security. As Energy Secretary, how will you provide strategic direction to the Department and Labs in addressing safety and security concerns of the technology?

Response: Security and protection of the critical work of DOE's National laboratories from foreign intervention will be a top priority of mine. Given the role of Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico, I look forward to working closely with you on this issue of national importance.

Question 30: There is an undeniable financing gap called the "missing middle" for first-of-a-kind energy technologies looking to commercialize and deploy at scale. These types of companies are looking to demonstrate their tech at pilot- or large-scale have outgrown venture capital investors but are too risky for traditional infrastructure investors. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure that the federal government closes this gap and helps to fast track the solutions that need to get to market now to meet growing electricity demand and national security concerns?

Response: I will evaluate the work of DOE programs and efforts such as ARPA-E, which was established to foster, support, and demonstrate technology solutions to meet growing electricity demand and national security.

Question 31: Through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the federal government has invested in the demonstration of next generation energy technologies across the United States. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring these demonstrations are successful and eventually deployed at commercial scale to bring new jobs and industries across America?

Response: I support the demonstration of next generation energy technologies and will look for all ways to meet our shared goal of bringing new jobs and industries to America through access to affordable, reliable and secure American energy.

Question 32: The demand for skills in AI, cyber security, and data science has surged in recent years, yet the supply of skilled workers remains inadequate. Bridging these skills gaps is crucial for securing the future of the American workforce. What would you do as Energy Secretary to develop the world's best STEM workforce?

Response: America's strength is fueled by the most innovative and skilled workforce in the world. Bridging the skills gap is a priority as we seek to lead the world in innovation. This is not just in our universities and high schools, but trade schools and apprentice programs.

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Fostering future leaders with a passion for science, technology, engineering and mathematics is crucial for U.S. competitiveness, security and innovation in this century and beyond.

Question 33: Next-generation geothermal is an emerging energy source with immense potential. The DOE's Commercial Liftoff report estimates that next-generation geothermal could provide 90 GW of clean, firm energy by 2050, and up to 300 GW depending on the development of storage capabilities and other emerging technologies. Geothermal energy is also 24/7 firm energy produced in the US, building on innovations from the US oil and gas industry. This represents an opportunity for the US to lead the world in energy innovation while producing huge amounts of power. However, next-generation geothermal is an emerging technology that needs support to reach commercial scale. There is emerging bipartisan support in Congress and on this committee to take action to accelerate geothermal energy. Will you commit to prioritizing geothermal energy, and if so, how?

Response: I have had a front row seat to the potential of advanced geothermal technology. I am optimistic about advancing geothermal technology deployment and will examine ways to accelerate it.

Question 34: Presently, transmission and generation constraints across the country are restricting economic growth, including data center development. What actions are you prepared to take to support increased energy development and alleviate the burdens of permitting processes for energy infrastructure?

Response: President Trump campaigned on unleashing American energy at home and abroad to restore energy dominance. To compete globally, I will evaluate every path to increase energy production, including commercial nuclear and liquified natural gas, and cut the cost of energy. I will also work with my colleagues to examine the permitting process to reduce barriers for building critical infrastructure. Such barriers make energy more expensive and less reliable.

Question 35: With electricity demand now projected to increase a staggering 128 GW over the next five years due to AI, a welcome resurgence of domestic manufacturing and other factors, it's clear we're going to need a lot more electrons – as well as a power grid capable of delivering those electrons from where they're produced to where they're consumed. With that in mind, can you speak to your support for building out and modernizing our electric grid – and what steps you think we need to take to meet the urgency of this challenge?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and protecting the electricity grid and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. I am evaluating steps to meet the urgency of this challenge, and I look forward to sharing more analysis and insight with you and hearing from you in the months ahead if confirmed.

Question 36: The industrial and manufacturing sector has been the backbone of American economic growth and development. Over the last several years, U.S. companies—often with the support of the Department of Energy—have led the world in industrial innovations to modernize our factories to make them more efficient, resilient, and competitive in the global marketplace.

DOE funding and partnership are vital to accelerating the commercialization and deployment of these technologies and maintaining American leadership in critical sectors like steel, cement, and chemicals.

- If confirmed, can you commit that DOE will continue administering programs supporting industry and manufacturing across the technology development spectrum, including the Industrial Demonstrations Program supporting over 30 manufacturing projects across the country? Will you commit to ensuring there is adequate leadership and coordination within the Department across technology and program offices supporting industry and manufacturing to promote efficient, practical private sector engagement? If confirmed, will you direct the Department to work with private sector producers and buyers of industrial goods to ensure these innovations can scale and be widely adopted?

Response: The onshoring of energy-intensive manufacturing is critical to the future of our country. A critical component of manufacturing investment is access to affordable, reliable and secure energy and critical infrastructure and I commit to working to elevating these energy priorities at the Department of Energy if confirmed.

Question 37: My home state, New Mexico, is at the heart of US nuclear energy innovation, with a legacy of national laboratory leadership and now, key activities under the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program or ARDP. The Kairos Power demonstration, as well as the Pathway 1 demonstrations of TerraPower's and X-energy's technologies, will pave the way for clean energy deployment, high-paying energy jobs, and US global energy leadership to counter the growing influence of our adversaries, including China. Getting these demonstrations across the finish line is essential and will require continued federal investment and partnership. How do you plan to continue moving the ARDP projects forward, particularly to ensure they can meet their ambitious timelines of operation by 2030?

Response: I look forward to learning more about the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program and its importance in countering the growing influence of overseas adversaries. I look forward to discussing the program's ambitious timeline and partnering with you if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 38: Clean hydrogen technologies will play an important role in not only decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors of our economy, such as industry and heavy-duty transportation, but also maintaining US competitiveness in these key sectors while providing tangible economic benefits to Americans. Will you ensure and support the continued leadership of DOE on the development of such technologies, so that they are successfully implemented and allow the private sector to succeed?

Response: I will work to foster the continued leadership of DOE in supporting the development and successful implementation of energy technologies that deliver all forms of affordable, reliable and secure American energy.

Question 39: The Department of Energy is responsible for implementing programs to support innovation in industrial manufacturing. Through partnerships with leaders in the private sector,

these programs are anticipated to create and maintain tens of thousands of high-quality jobs across the country and help accelerate the development and adoption of emerging industrial technologies – technologies that can help America regain a competitive edge in the production of materials like steel and aluminum that are critical for our defense industrial base. What will you do to ensure the successful implementation of these important programs and the long-term viability of key manufacturing sectors?

Response: I will support innovation in industrial manufacturing through the work of DOE's national laboratory network.

Question 40: Major sectors of the U.S. economy are experiencing shortages and delays with delivery of capital equipment – especially power generation and distribution equipment – and materials. Specifically, the lead times for transformer orders, particularly distribution transformers, increased from three to six months in 2019 to 12 to 30 months in 2023 (U.S. DOE, Office of Electricity, "DOE and Industry Team Up to Keep the Lights On for America"). What actions are you prepared to take to increase domestic manufacturing capacity, diversify sourcing options, and foster collaboration between government, industry, and research institutions to help alleviate supply chain constraints for critical electrical infrastructure?

Response: Strengthening the supply chain for critical electrical infrastructure will be part of my planned review of America's electricity grid and goal of outlining steps for modernization. To protect Americans against cyber and other attacks and account for new sources and improved efficiencies, we must tackle the challenges that come with aging electricity infrastructure and if confirmed, I will focus on this important task.

Question 41: In the last Congress, we saw extensive bipartisan support for investments into US nuclear fuel availability to reduce our dangerous reliance on Russia. A robust supply of high-assay low-enriched uranium or HALEU for the next generation of advanced nuclear reactors allows us to secure this essential energy source and regain US leadership in the nuclear space from Russia, the only commercial supplier of HALEU globally. How will you strengthen US nuclear fuel enrichment capabilities, and how will you speed implementation of federal commitments to ensure advanced reactors are fueled on time to commercialize?

Response: America's domestic supply of enriched uranium is essential for the United States. I will evaluate the Department's current plans and our approach to the HALEU program to ensure this program is successful.

Question 42: You have said that if confirmed, you will step down from the board of Oklo, a nuclear company with business before the Department of Energy. Will you also divest and recuse yourself from decisions concerning this company?

Response: Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position with Oklo, Inc. I will forfeit my unvested restricted stock units upon my separation from Oklo, Inc. Pursuant to the impartiality regulations, for a period of one year after my resignation, I also will not participate personally or substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know Oklo, Inc., is a

party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate by the Department's designated ethics official.

Question 43: There is widespread bipartisan agreement our supply chains, including for batteries and minerals, need to be more secured. Industries working on battery recycling and alternative battery chemistry are vital to that effort, not to mention they are huge job creators and are far more sustainable than primary extraction. DOE has been essential to battery recycling and creating more efficient and sustainable batteries. Do you support continuing investments and work at DOE on methods such as a circular economy and alternative battery chemistries?

Response: Innovation is at the center of DOE's national laboratories and I will evaluate investments and the work underway at DOE, such as advancing a circular economy and alternative battery chemistries.

Question 44: During Trump's first administration, the presidential budget request showed the administration's resolve to retreat from a federal role in advancing a clean energy economy and maintaining global leadership in the growing energy markets. For example, the first Trump administration repeatedly proposed slashing funding for DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy and eliminating the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) program. These recommended funding cuts would have crippled support for a myriad of novel and promising technologies. Congress rejected these presidential proposals, recognizing that the greatest successes in reducing climate emissions and creating a cleaner, more affordable, and more reliable energy economy can be attributed to the transformational role of federal renewable energy innovation programs such as EERE and ARPA-E.

- Will you commit to this Committee that you will oppose proposals to cut DOE's budget and staffing from current levels? Will you commit to oppose layoffs? Reductions in DOE's workforce through attrition? Will you commit to opposing efforts to traumatize staff into quitting? Will you commit to maintaining civil service protections and reject replacing career professionals with political appointees?

Response: I will evaluate the work of ARPA-E, which was established to foster, support and demonstrate technology solutions and I look forward to working with you and your staff on advancing all domestic forms of affordable, reliable and secure energy.

Question 45: Established in 2021, the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) was created with bipartisan support and plays a critical role in efforts to reduce emissions, foster U.S. leadership in the global clean energy innovation landscape and strengthen our domestic industrial base. By supporting large-scale demonstrations, the office fills an essential and longstanding gap within DOE's portfolio for clean energy technologies and energy innovation that hindered the commercialization of new clean energy solutions coming out of lab or pilot scale. Specifically, OCED helps solve critical issues around how to build markets and demand for new clean energy technologies, essential to their widescale deployment and to spurring private sector investments. OCED's current portfolio is focused on scaling and commercializing technologies such as clean hydrogen, carbon capture and removal, and grid-scale energy storage. As a core pillar of our nation's efforts to reduce emissions while providing opportunities for American leadership, jobs,

and foreign competitiveness, OCED helps to ensure that U.S. communities receive a return on public investments in research, development, demonstration, and deployment. This type of innovation is crucial to establish the U.S. at the cutting edge of valuable and globally exportable technologies.

- OCED's foundation is still nascent, and its workforce is steadily growing to expand the program's capabilities and expertise as selected awarded and proposed projects scale. Will you commit to this Committee that you will continue to support the program's strategic workforce planning needs, which includes aligning human capital needs with mission and programmatic goals?
- Do you commit to supporting OCED's awarded projects?

Response: If confirmed, I will evaluate OCED's awarded projects and the program's strategic workforce planning and I look forward to working with you and your team on ways to spur private sector investments.

Question 46: The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy recently published a report titled "2024 EERE Investment Snapshot: Advancing Energy Innovation Across America." This report detailed EERE's impressive investment portfolio, including a map of EERE's almost 2,000 active awards across the country – including an active award in every state. The report also details the longstanding relationship that EERE-funded national labs have with universities, research institutions, tribes, and the private sector. These partnerships create a holistic approach to research and development, engaging various stakeholders throughout the process to provide technological breakthroughs that keep the U.S. on the cutting edge of global innovation.

- How will you approach DOE's longstanding role in fostering energy innovation through investments across the research, development, and demonstration learning curve to ensure the United States remains globally competitive?
- As you know, DOE has invested in an all-of-the-above approach to energy technologies. As Secretary, will you continue to support all of DOE's applied energy offices, including those under the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) portfolio?
- What will you do as Secretary to protect and foster the longstanding relationships between DOE's applied energy offices and our national labs with non-governmental actors such as universities and other research institutions, state and local governments, tribes, and the private sector?

Response: DOE national laboratories are the crown jewel of our nation's scientific research and technology innovation. I look forward to fostering their important work in all forms of affordable, reliable and secure energy and evaluating their partnerships with non-governmental organizations, such as universities and other research institutions, state and local governments, tribes, and the private sector as well as trade and apprenticeship programs.

Question 47: I have immense respect for this nation's National Labs, which the Energy Secretary has the great honor of overseeing. It is critical that we have these rigorous and apolitical scientific institutions to inform our policy and keep our nation safe and prosperous.

- Can I expect that you will share my respect for science and the work of these labs?

- If your National Labs were to put out a study, would you trust it and ensure that DOE policy is informed by the evidence the study contains

Response: I share your perspective on the great national asset we hold in DOE's national laboratories and would be honored to foster and support the research they produce if I am confirmed as Secretary. I look forward to working with you and your team on DOE policies in the years ahead.

Question 48: Globally, we are beginning to see markets emerging based on the emissions intensity of industries, such as the European Commission's carbon border adjustment mechanism and the ICAO CORSIA Sustainable Aviation Fuel mandate. How will you approach DOE's role in ensuring the United States can stay globally competitive in these emerging markets through investments in lower-emitting technologies?

Response: I share the president's goal to shepherd U.S. leadership in technology innovations and energy solutions to unleash all forms of affordable and reliable energy. I look forward to working with you and the Committee to ensure the U.S. fosters global competitiveness and leadership in emerging energy markets through policy solutions and the work of U.S. national laboratories.

Question 49: In a 2023 video you posted to LinkedIn, you denied the existence of a climate crisis and disputed a global transition to clean energy. Even though you've claimed not to question the existence of climate change, you have publicly criticized policies aimed at tackling the climate crisis, including DOE's goal to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, labeling such policies as misguided and alarmist. You've also claimed that any negative impacts of climate change are "clearly overwhelmed by the benefits of increasing energy consumption." Such assertions are in strong contradiction with national and global scientific data. Your previous comments lead me to question your preparedness to lead DOE, a federal scientific agency that actively develops clean energy technologies and solutions to combat the climate crisis through its various national laboratories and research programs. Thus, the agency is a key player in the fight against climate change within the federal government.

- If confirmed, do you commit to not undermining the scientific integrity of the DOE?
- If confirmed, do you commit that your decisions on the agency's behalf are rooted in sound science?
- Can you commit to ensuring that DOE's clean energy programs have the resources they need to continue the vital research, development, demonstration, and deployment of next-generation technologies?

Response: I call myself a science geek turned tech nerd turned energy entrepreneur, and I respect and will continue to respect scientific innovations and varying viewpoints. Throughout my lifetime, technology and innovation have immeasurably enhanced the human condition. We must protect and accelerate the work of the Department's national laboratory network to secure America's competitive edge and its security.

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Question 50: You currently own a $50 million stake in Liberty Energy, the fracking company that you founded and led. As the Energy Secretary, you will be responsible for decisions that could further enrich companies like Liberty Energy.

- How will you address and eliminate any conflict of interest between your stake in Liberty Energy and your ability to carry out the position of Energy Secretary. What will you do to ensure that you are putting the best interests of the American people above your personal financial gain? And will you agree to be fully transparent regarding DOE decisions that impact Liberty Energy or other companies in which you hold a financial stake?

Response: Upon confirmation, I will resign my position with Liberty Energy and divest my interests in Liberty Energy as soon as practicable but no later than 90 days after my confirmation. In the interest of ensuring the highest standards of integrity, I have taken all actions recommended by the Office of Government Ethics – as are outlined in form OGE-278e – to ensure impartiality and reduce any conflicts of interest – real or perceived – to best serve the President upon confirmation as Secretary of Energy.

Questions Senator James E. Risch

Question 1: Idaho National Laboratory in my home state is the global leader in nuclear energy research and development, which is key for our energy and national security. Will you continue to support this critical nuclear research and development at the Department and our national labs?

Response: Senator, I enjoyed visiting with you about the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) and discussing its long history in nuclear energy research and development as well as other missions, including cybersecurity. I will continue to support INL's important mission. I am a strong believer in the essential nature of nuclear energy and research in advanced nuclear solutions for America's long-term competitiveness, energy independence and national security.

Question 2: As authorized by Congress, the federal dams in the Northwest provide a tremendous amount of power to ratepayers in my state, as well as transportation of various products and other benefits. This electricity is affordable, clean, reliable, and dependable and should not be used as a political football as millions of people in our region face affordability, resource adequacy, and grid reliability challenges. Despite this, hydropower dams in the Northwest were constantly targeted by the last administration. Are you supportive of our hydropower resources and can I count on the opportunity to engage with you on how to correct the numerous ill-conceived promises of the Biden Administration when it comes to Northwest hydropower as it relates to the Department of Energy?

Response: I look forward to working with you and your staff on hydropower and learning more about your views on the appropriate role of the Department of Energy in fostering all forms of affordable, reliable and secure energy and necessary infrastructure in the Pacific Northwest.

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Question 3: The future of the American economy is rooted in our technological dominance, including advanced AI and semiconductor research and production. If we are going to stay competitive, we need a reliable, cost-effective, and safe electricity grid. What should we do to ensure we can meet the electricity demands of America's technology industry and should nuclear energy play a role?

Response: President Trump is committed to unleashing all forms of affordable and reliable energy and cutting the cost of energy. In 2019, under President Trump's leadership, U.S. nuclear energy production was the highest on record. Nuclear energy will play an important role in the rapidly increasing demand for electricity from data centers and artificial intelligence. Strengthening, modernizing, and protecting the electricity grid and other critical infrastructure is a top priority.

Questions from Senator Ron Wyden

Question 1: The experts at DOE and the National Labs have worked in partnership with the Department of the Treasury to implement and administer energy tax credits. Do you commit to letting this technical, scientific work continue without interference?

Response: I look forward to learning more about the Department of Treasury's energy tax credits and the Department of Energy's expertise, including at its national laboratories, in supporting this work.

Question 2: The energy tax credits passed in the Inflation Reduction Act embrace technological neutrality in energy policy because we don't know where the low-carbon fuels of the future will come from. How will you work with the National Labs to innovate new ways to reduce carbon emissions from the energy sector?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to identifying ways to support our national laboratories in leading the world in emerging technology research and energy innovation.

Question 3: According to a new analysis, repeal of the Inflation Reduction Act would raise energy prices by an average of 10% for consumers across the country–in some states it would be much higher - over $250/year for households in four states, for example. How will you ensure Americans continue to enjoy the clean energy and energy-saving benefits that will lower costs while ensuring cleaner air and water? In what ways will the administration advance the development of low-carbon and low-cost energy sources?

Response: America is blessed with abundant resources to power our economy. Yet today regulatory and permitting uncertainty has hastened investments in all sources of affordable, reliable, and secure American energy, which means higher inflation and higher energy costs. President Trump is committed to unleashing U.S. energy resources and spurring investments in necessary infrastructure to attract manufacturing supply chains back to America. If confirmed, I will work across the Department of Energy to support unleashing all forms of affordable and reliable energy – including clean energy – and fostering technology innovations.

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Question 4: If confirmed, will you work with my office and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to ensure the Department of Energy prioritizes investments in modernizing and expanding BPA's transmission system to meet growing demands and support the Pacific Northwest's economic and clean energy goals? As part of DOE's oversight of BPA, will you commit to working with my office to ensure BPA has the resources and tools needed to meet the region's infrastructure and energy challenges effectively?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and expanding transmission systems and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. I look forward to working with you and your staff to better understand the region's infrastructure and energy challenges and support the Bonneville Power Administration.

Question 5: Wildfires today are not your grandfather's wildfires, regardless of what one thinks causes them. Can you clarify that you will continue the work at DOE to increase the resilience of the electricity grid to extreme weather such as wildfires?

Response: The most important factor regarding extreme weather is the impact that it has on human lives. Increasing the resilience of the electricity grid and other critical infrastructure is essential to better human lives and secure America's economic competitiveness and energy independence and I will evaluate all work underway on this important priority.

Question 6: Oregon and many states across the nation are charting their own energy futures, with ambitious goals to reduce carbon emissions. If confirmed as Secretary of Energy, will you respect the decisions Oregon and other states have made to move toward renewable energy and overall lower carbon-emitting energy sources?

Response: In President Trump's first term in office, without sacrificing any economic gains, American energy became cleaner than ever before. The United States led the world in greenhouse gas emissions reductions, having cut energy-related CO2 emissions by 12 percent from 2005 to 2018 while the rest of the world increased emissions by nearly 24 percent. I look forward to learning more about the Department's efforts in clean energy research and development and ways states are deploying energy technology.

Question 7: Congress appropriated funds to DOE specifically to establish four regional Direct Air Capture (DAC) Hubs around the country. DOE's work on the DAC Hubs must not be interrupted at this critical juncture, or we will risk falling behind to other countries, notably foreign countries of concern. Under your leadership, will DOE continue to fund the DAC Hubs program, as required by law, and allow the current DAC Hubs Notice of Funding Opportunity to proceed as intended?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DOE's work on Direct Air Capture Hubs and understanding your views on the best ways to lead the world in energy innovation and technology breakthroughs.

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Question 8: The DOE Loan Program Office has the loan guarantee program which supports jobs, domestic manufacturing, and U.S competition with China when it comes to innovation. Would you support the DOE loan guarantee program as the Secretary of Energy? Will you be expanding the program for domestic producers of minerals and expediting acceptance for their projects?

Response: I look forward to learning more about DOE's Loan Guarantee program and other DOE programs directed by Congress.

Question 9: The current 'meaningful consultation' standard isn't working for many tribes. Federal projects that have impacts on tribes are approved with minor or no changes as a result of tribal input. Do you support the Administration's adoption of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for impacted Indigenous communities, especially for DOE financed projects?

Response: I support meaningful engagement with native American tribal councils and will seek to accommodate their preferences where feasible and appropriate.

Question 10: Our supply chains, including for batteries and minerals, need to be more secure. Industries working on battery recycling and alternative battery chemistry are vital to that effort, not to mention they are huge job creators and are far more sustainable than primary extraction. DOE has been essential to battery recycling and creating more efficient and sustainable batteries. Do you support continuing investments and work at DOE on methods such as a circular economy and alternative battery chemistries?

Response: Innovation is at the center of DOE's national laboratories, and I will evaluate investments and the work underway at DOE, such as advancing a circular economy and alternative battery chemistries.

Question 11: The Energy Secretary has the great honor of overseeing this nation's National Labs, which are rigorous and apolitical scientific institutions that inform our policy. Will you maintain a respect for science and findings provided by scientists? If the National Labs were to publish a study, would you trust the results and ensure that DOE policy is informed by the evidence the study contains?

In December, the DOE released a study on the impacts of LNG exports, informed by rigorous scenario-based analysis performed by the National Labs on the economic, environmental, and security implications of additional LNG export authorizations. Can you confirm that you will take this study into account when determining whether additional LNG exports are in the public interest of the American people?

Response: I share your perspective on the great national asset we hold in DOE's national laboratories and am honored for the potential opportunity to foster and support the research they produce. I look forward to working with you and your team on DOE policies in the years ahead.

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Question 12: The Department of Energy has already permitted LNG exports equal to 50% of U.S. gas production, and President-elect Trump has promised that his energy department will rubber-stamp large volumes of additional capacity as one of his first acts in office. The recent DOE report found that approving additional authorizations would raise gas costs for Americans by 30%, while also raising electricity prices and the costs of manufactured goods. Will you approve additional volumes of LNG exports at the expense of American households struggling with the costs of natural gas, electricity, and consumer goods? Are there any limits on exports you would support to protect American families, for example in times of gas or electricity price spikes?

Response: I will ensure that DOE considers reliable and accurate information related to LNG export applications consistent with its legal obligations, including whether the exports proposed by the applicant are in the public interest as required by the National Gas Act.

During his first term in office, President Trump's energy revolution put the U.S. among the top three LNG exporters in the world. The Trump administration streamlined LNG permitting and allowed long-term LNG export authorizations to be extended through 2050. President Trump granted more than 20 new long-term approvals for LNG exports to non-free trade agreement countries. LNG exports increased five-fold since January 2017, reaching an all-time high in January 2020, while delivering low domestic natural gas prices. LNG exports reduced the American trade deficit by over $10 billion.

Question 13: The clean energy investments being made in the US have led to a major manufacturing renaissance - hundreds of billions of dollars in private investments helping create jobs in cities, suburbs and rural communities across the country. How will you continue to support this trend? Do you agree that homegrown clean energy must be a part of delivering American energy dominance? Do you support President Trump's vow to claw back these investments even though it would mean the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs, with a high proportion in Republican districts?

Response: The security of our nation begins with energy. If confirmed, I will focus on unleashing American energy at home and abroad to restore energy dominance. Some policymakers have viewed energy as a liability instead of the immense national asset that it is to the United States. It is a priority for President Trump to expand energy production from all affordable, reliable, and secure U.S. sources and cut the cost of energy for all Americans.

Question 14: The devastating impacts of extreme weather are all around us and are harming communities and costing taxpayers tremendously–with science making it clear that climate change is worsening these disasters. Do you think taxpayers or polluters should be paying for the damage being wrought by climate change-fueled extreme weather?

Response: The most important factor regarding extreme weather is the impact that it has on human lives. The best path to address extreme weather is to make massive improvements in energy technologies that can deliver low-carbon energy that is also low cost, reliable and secure.

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Question 15: For the first time in a number of years, utilities are seeing increased demand for electricity, thanks to the explosive growth and electrical needs of data centers, electrification of the transportation fleet and buildings, and reshoring of manufacturing projects. The fact that we've seen sizzling-fast deployment of solar and wind in the past few years has blunted price increases, given that clean energy is the cheapest and fastest source of energy to bring online. What would you do to ensure that clean electricity projects continue to ramp up production and drive down energy costs for families? In order to avoid rolling brown and black outs, we must invest in critical transmission infrastructure, and new generation. What do you think the Federal Government's role is in updating critical energy infrastructure?

Response: Private investment is critical to strengthening and updating our critical infrastructure. If confirmed, I intent to evaluate opportunities to unlock private investment, including by making government more efficient for the American people. Updating our nation's energy infrastructure is imperative for providing affordable and reliable energy to the American people, and for America to remain at the global forefront of technology.

Question 16: Will you follow the laws that dictate your service and the mission of the Department or Office you are being considered to run? And will you uphold those laws even when pressured by President Trump to disregard them in order to score political points? Will you commit to refuse illegal orders, follow the law, and serve the public, not just the president's personal interests?

Response: My practice is to follow the law.

Question 17: Expanding transmission capacity is essential to interconnecting new electric generating resources to the grid and meeting growing electricity demand. Through its Coordinated Interagency Authorizations and Permits (CITAP) Program, DOE has made good progress in streamlining the permitting process for building critical transmission infrastructure. CITAP allows the Department to serve as a lead agency in environmental reviews and sets a 2-year timeline for the completion of such reviews. If confirmed, do you commit to using this program to expedite transmission corridor buildout? And do you have thoughts now about how can DOE further reduce the average time it takes to site and permit transmission projects?

Response: I agree that expanding transmission capacity is important to securing and modernizing a resilient electricity grid to meet growing electricity demand. I commit to learning more about the Department's work and programs on this important priority.

Question 18: Since the passing of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the US has established itself as a global leader in the hydrogen space, thanks in large part to the establishment of the Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs program. This DOE program establishes seven clean hydrogen hubs that demonstrate how hydrogen technologies can be a significant value-add for multiple sectors of the economy. The Boston Consulting Group found a global market size of $3 trillion for clean hydrogen, and programs like the Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs will put the US in a much stronger position to compete against rivals like China by demonstrating the commercial viability of clean hydrogen and its use in various sectors. According to a recent Rhodium Group

analysis, the hydrogen hubs program also has the potential to create tens of thousands of long-term, good quality jobs for everyday Americans working in multiple sectors of the US economy. Five of the seven selected hydrogen hubs have finalized agreements to receive their first tranche of DOE funding. Will you commit to protecting the Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs program and ensure that this program and the resources that Congress has provided is implemented sufficiently under your leadership?

Response: I will work to foster the continued leadership of DOE in supporting the development and successful implementation of energy technologies that deliver all forms of affordable, reliable and secure American energy – including hydrogen. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DOE's work on Hydrogen Hubs and understanding your views on the best ways to lead the world in energy innovation and technology breakthroughs.

Questions from Senator Steve Daines

Question 1: Mr. Wright, as we discussed during the hearing, protecting and expanding baseload power is critical for meeting our country's and the world's growing energy demand. Do you agree that baseload energy sources like the Colstrip Power Plant in Montana and the Lower Snake River Hydropower dams should continue to operate and supply affordable, reliable and secure power to Montanans and the Pacific Northwest as a whole?

Response: Yes.

Question 2: Mr. Wright, the Calumet Refinery and Montana Renewables in Great Falls is now working with DOE to expand renewable fuels capacity and build jobs in Montana. As we discussed in the hearing, I believe the best way to reduce emissions is through innovation, not regulation. Do you agree that the Department of Energy should promote innovative solutions like carbon capture, small modular nuclear reactors, and sustainable and renewable fuels?

Response: Yes. I support innovation as a solution to the majority of energy challenges.

Question 3: Mr. Wright, hydropower makes up a large percentage of Montana's energy production. Do you agree that we should protect and continue to expand hydropower development, whether that's through traditional hydropower resources, or next generation technology such as in-stream hydrokinetic?

Response: I support hydropower in Montana. I look forward to learning more about in-stream hydrokinetic and working with you.

Question 4: Mr. Wright, do you agree that we should increase domestic critical mineral development in order to meet increased demand in all sectors, including energy development and transmission?

Response: Yes.

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Questions from Senator Maria Cantwell

Question 1: Hanford Nuclear Cleanup Mission

Mr. Wright, thank you for your remarks about the federal government's moral obligation to clean up the Hanford nuclear reservation. I wanted to follow up on our discussion about the Tri-Party Agreement. On April 11, 2024, the U.S. Department of Energy, Washington state Department of Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finalized a wholistic agreement that includes the January 8, 2025 Order Amending Consent Decree in the State of Washington v. the Department of Energy, et al. Case No. 08-5085-RMP and the January 3 and January 7, 2025 amendments to the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order.

- Will you commit to upholding this holistic and hard won agreement?

Response: As a general matter, it is my belief that legal agreements should be honored. If confirmed, I will familiarize myself with the Hanford Settlement Agreement and would be happy to meet to discuss the agreement and the critical importance of cleaning up the Hanford Site.

The Tri-City community near Hanford has been working for decades to leverage assets such as DOE's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Washington State University Tri-Cities, Energy Northwest's Columbia Generating Station, and the local skilled workforce to become a leading clean energy hub nationally, with a particular focus on nuclear energy and decarbonized industrial production. Additionally, there are countless opportunities for beneficial reuse of DOE land, facilities, and materials such as the Strontium 90 at Hanford's Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility.

- Can you please share your thoughts on what you envision DOE's role to be in supporting economic growth and diversification in communities near DOE sites?

Response: I am a great supporter of cooperation with local communities to support economic growth and diversification.

Question 2: Bonneville Power Administration

Mr. Wright, the Bonneville Power Administration provides electric power, transmission, and efficiency services over a 300,000 square mile area that includes Oregon, Washington, Idaho, western Montana, and parts of northern California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. DOE recently changed BPA's reporting structure, but this has not worked well for BPA.

- Will you commit to reviewing this structure and consider restore having power marketing administrations like BPA report to the Deputy Secretary or the Under Secretary for Science and Innovation?

Response: I commit to the review you suggest and would be pleased to report my thoughts and observations.

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Question 3: **Pacific Northwest National Laboratory**
Mr. Wright, the national laboratories bring tremendous capabilities and intellectual horsepower in key areas of energy and national security including grid reliability, energy storage and cybersecurity. One example is the cutting-edge capabilities associated with PNNL's Energy Infrastructure Operations Center, which has supported efforts like the Department's North American Energy Resilience Model (NAERM); as well as bringing the Department's AI capabilities to emerging topics of importance including wildfire risk, preparedness, and response.

- How do you plan to fully engage and utilize national labs to improve the reliability, affordability and security of our energy system?

Response: National labs are an essential feature of DOE's extraordinary cutting-edge research and abilities. I am looking forward to visiting the PNNL as one of our outstanding examples.

There are considerable challenges, especially out west, to maintain grid reliability and affordability driven by large increases in demand, including data centers, increased renewable with inverter-based devices like solar and wind and lack of regional planning integrating transmission and distribution. All of this is happening against the very real backdrop of increasing wildfire threat to our infrastructure.

- How do you plan to ensure the Department will engage regional stakeholders and national laboratories to improve the grid reliability, security and affordability of our country's energy system?

Response: Although I have not been briefed yet, it is my view that grid reliability remains an essential element of our nation's infrastructure. It is the backbone for essential services, economic growth and basic reliability for homes and businesses. It is key to have robust engagement with a myriad of stakeholders to make sure all data points and perspectives are taken into account as we work together to improve and expand the capacity and reliability of our grid.

Last year I attended the dedication of the Grid Storage Launchpad (GSL) at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. As you may know, GSL is a grid energy storage research and development facility that will help accelerate development of next-generation grid energy storage technologies.

- How will you as the leader of the Department utilize GSL to advance America's energy storage competitiveness to eliminate/reduce our reliance on foreign owned critical minerals and foreign supply chain risks?

Response: I have not yet been briefed on this subject, but I believe energy storage is essential for these types of projects, and I support the concept and look forward to learning more.

Starting in the first Trump Administration, DOE has invested in advancing the role of energy innovation in the blue economy—ports, maritime, marine energy and ocean observation—and advancing our nation's energy security. Some of those key investments have been made at the Department's Marine and Coastal Research Laboratory at PNNL-Sequim.

- Will you commit to continuing DOE's support for these investments, and visit PNNL-Sequim?

Response: I have not been briefed on this subject yet. I look forward to learning more about the laboratory at PNNL-Sequim and understanding the advantages of this technology.

As you know, DOE has a key role to play in AI. In my home state for example, PNNL is a leader in applying AI to grid modernization, advancing scientific discovery in chemistry, and national security. It is critical that DOE is properly included as the Trump Administration approaches AI, including utilizing national laboratory assets.

- How will you ensure that DOE's capabilities are brought to bear in AI, across the Trump Administration and for the nation? How will you ensure that DOE and its national labs can continue advancing AI work?

Response: Public private partnerships are essential for developing future energy sources. If confirmed, I stand ready to support such efforts.

<u>Question 4</u>: Fusion

Mr. Wright, one of the great energy successes we have had in recent years is in fostering public-private partnerships. These partnerships are especially critical for supporting the rapid expansion of newer energy technologies.

- Can you talk about how you believe the Department of Energy can continue to support the development of public-private partnerships to help the commercial deployment of emerging technologies such as fusion energy.

Response: Throughout its history, the Department of Energy has funded research, development, and deployment with the private sector that has led to significant breakthroughs in energy technology and participated in public-private partnerships on energy demonstration projects. I look forward to evaluating existing public-private partnerships in technology innovation to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and energy security.

As the US looks to lead on the development of next generation power technologies, like fusion, but also advanced nuclear, and enhanced geothermal, what role do you envision the DOE in helping bring these new technologies to the market?

- In particular, what role do you see the DOE Loan Programs Office (LPO) in helping financially support new generation technologies not yet at commercial scale?
- What other actions do you believe the Department of Energy should take to ensure the U.S. remains the world leader in fusion technology?

Response: I look forward to learning more about DOE's Loan Guarantee program and other DOE programs directed by Congress to accelerate emerging technology demonstration and scalability. I also intend to evaluate fusion energy research, innovation, and related work underway at the Department of Energy's national laboratories, and if confirmed, I look forward to working with your office on this and other promising technologies.

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Question 5: Smart Grid Grants

Mr. Wright, this Committee authored provisions in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to make the U.S. power grid more resilient, adaptive, and efficient. So far, DOE has invested more than $14 billion of the dollars Congress provided to boost the U.S. power grid. Funding that has been matched many times over by the private sector in all 50 states.

Many states have received support through important programs like the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (or GRIP program) that I originally authored back in 2007.
These investments will have tangible benefits and cost savings of nearly $100 million for electric ratepayers in my State.

- Will you commit to seeing these important investments through to completion?
- And ensure that all remaining funding in these important grid-enhancing programs from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are deployed by the Department of Energy?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and protecting the electricity grid and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. I look forward to learning more about the GRIP program and other efforts and investments underway at the Department to meet the urgency of this challenge.

Question 6: Hydrogen Hubs

Mr. Wright, one of the most widely supported energy investments by Congress has been figuring out how we can accelerate the use of hydrogen.

DOE selected the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Hub - which was a joint application from entities in Washington, Oregon, and Montana –to serve as a national model of how an integrated, totally emission free hydrogen network. I understand you agree that hydrogen is a promising fuel for the future.

- Will you work with Congress to continue the strong bipartisan support for scaling up clean and affordable hydrogen, including championing DOE's hydrogen hub program?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with you to foster the continued leadership of DOE in supporting the development and successful implementation of energy technologies that deliver all forms of affordable, reliable, and secure American energy. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DOE's work on Hydrogen Hubs and understanding your views on the best ways to lead the world in energy innovation and technology breakthroughs.

DOE's input to Treasury and the White House will continue to play a major role in implementing the hydrogen 45V production tax credit.

- Do you support the hydrogen tax credit that the hubs have said is necessary for their success and for standing up the national hydrogen economy?

Response: I will work with the Congress and the Treasury Department in developing appropriate levels of support for hydrogen.

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Question 7: Advanced Nuclear & Fuel Supply

Mr. Wright, my home state of Washington is a key epicenter of advanced nuclear energy in the United States.

TerraPower, based in Bellevue, WA, is leading the way with Natrium, an advanced reactor being built in Wyoming as part of a public-private partnership with the Department of Energy under the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program, or ARDP. X-Energy, the other ARDP demonstration awardee, is also looking to build a future reactor in Washington.

- Do you agree that we should continue to fully fund ARDP and ensure that the U.S. leads the way on advanced nuclear reactor technology?

Response: I support the goals of the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program and its efforts in countering the growing influence of overseas adversaries. I look forward to discussing the program's ambitious timeline and partnering with you if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

I understand the advanced nuclear energy community is anxiously waiting for the Department of Energy to advance its plan to establish a domestic uranium enrichment supply chain right here in the United States and move away from dependence on countries like Russia and China. High-assay, low-enriched uranium, or HALEU, is set to power the future fleet of advanced Generation 4 reactors.

- Will you commit to continue to support DOE's HALEU availability program?

Response: America's domestic supply of enriched uranium is essential for the United States. I will evaluate the Department's current plans and our approach to the HALEU program to ensure this program is successful.

Question 8: Transmission

Mr. Wright, FERC estimates that electricity demand will grow by 128 GW nationwide in the next five years, more than 15% from today's levels from a variety of sectors including manufacturing, data centers, and electrification. In Washington State we are expecting demand growth of 30% over the next decade.

Even if we built enough generation tomorrow to meet this new demand, we don't have sufficient transmission to transport it. It currently takes at least 7-11 years to build new large transmission in the United States, so how will DOE help address the urgent transmission bottlenecks today that are inhibiting economic growth and American leadership on AI?

Response: Lack of electric transmission capacity is one of the biggest barriers to economic growth, including growth led by manufacturing and AI. The United States has of late failed to build much new large scale transmission projects: only 55 miles of new high-voltage transmission were built in 2023. Permitting bureaucracy and red tape, myopic electricity system planning processes, and interstate disagreements on how to calculate who benefits from (and thus who pays for) a transmission line have ground new construction largely to a halt.

- How can DOE help address these market barriers to getting new steel in the ground to drive economic growth?

Response: I welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to strengthen, modernize, and protect America's electricity grid and other critical infrastructure to meet growing demand.

Question 9: Transmission Facilitation Program

Mr. Wright, Congress created the DOE's Transmission Facilitation Program (TFP) in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help build out new interregional transmission lines across the country. The TFP is a revolving fund program to provide Federal support to overcome the financial hurdles in the development of large-scale new transmission lines and upgrading existing transmission.

- Do you think the bipartisan Transmission Facilitation Program has been a success?
- Will you commit to supporting it as a tool to facilitate investment in major new transmission lines all across the U.S. at no additional cost to taxpayers?

Response: I have not yet been briefed on this program, but I will be happy for the Department to share an analysis at the appropriate time.

Question 10: U.S. Oil & Gas Production

Mr. Wright, in 2023, the U.S. produced more crude oil than any country, ever, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

- Can you describe the steps taken by the Biden Administration to achieve this record level of production?

Response: Today's record U.S. oil production is largely due to investment decisions and policy decisions made under previous administrations – including President Trump's first term in office – and American industry's focus on innovation, such as fracking. In fact, the Biden administration increased the cost of U.S. oil and natural gas leases by 50% and reduced the available acreage for responsible development by 80%. Today's record production is largely in spite of Biden administration policies to halt critical pipeline infrastructure, reduce onshore and offshore resources and urge foreign nations to increase their oil production.

Question 11: Wind Power

Mr. Wright, earlier this month President-elect Trump declared "We are going to have a policy where no windmills are being built promised that "no new windmills" would be built in the United States when he takes office.

- What role would you have as Secretary of Energy in fulfilling incoming President Trump's promise?

Response: Historically wind energy is among the most expensive forms of energy and provides intermittent power. Under President Trump's administration, we intend to unleash all forms of affordable, reliable, and secure American energy..

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Question 12: Surplus DOE Lands

Mr. Wright, I represent communities that support development of advanced reactors as well as critical parts of the nuclear fuel cycle and supply chain. In some cases, surplus DOE lands might be suitable for these nuclear facilities.

- Will you commit to reviewing and supporting where appropriate the use of surplus non-contaminated federal land for new energy development?

Response: Yes, I look forward to reviewing and discussing this further with you and your staff.

Question 13: Battery Supply Chains

We need to continue to onshore and diversify American energy and ensure are we not dependent on unstable or adversarial nations. The Washington state battery industry, including companies like Group14 and Sila, have worked with DOE and PNNL for the past decade to do just that, while also providing economic opportunities in our rural communities by building advanced silicon battery material factories in Eastern Washington. Unfortunately, the vast majority of lithium-ion batteries and energy storage technologies depend on graphite, and 95% of the world's battery-grade graphite is controlled by China. As China further restricts exports to the U.S., the urgency to strengthen domestic battery supply chains, including through these key Washington State factories, only grows.

- Given the rapidly increasing demand for energy storage solutions to support the grid, data centers, and other critical infrastructure, what steps would you take to continue fostering growth and resilience for U.S. battery supply chains, particularly for raw materials and silicon battery manufacturing, that can help end our dependence on Chinese graphite?

Response: Secure and reliable supply chains for critical materials, including critical minerals, are key to a prosperous and internationally competitive economy. Under President Trump's leadership, the security of our nation's critical mineral supply chains was made a priority for the Federal government. If confirmed, I look forward to evaluating ways for the United States to further enhance our supply chains, increase private sector investment, create jobs, and strengthen our national security.

Industries working on battery recycling are also vital to securing our supply chain, as well as being big job creators and more sustainable than primary extraction. DOE has been essential to battery recycling and creating more efficient and sustainable batteries.

- Do you support continuing investments and work at DOE on battery recycling and alternative battery chemistries?

Response: I support the concept of battery recycling.

Questions from Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D.

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Question 1: Liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports are incredibly important to the state of Louisiana, as two-thirds of current LNG exports and two-thirds of the non-FTA applications subject to the pause call Louisiana home. Given your experience on the upstream side of natural gas, how do you view the importance of the U.S. LNG industry?

Response: Natural gas has already proven to be a key component of efforts to reduce emissions both domestically and globally. Natural gas is also a low-cost fuel for reliable, dispatchable electricity generation. In addition, the vast amounts of natural gas deposits in the United States are large enough to supply domestic and international demand for years to come without material increases in the cost. Natural gas production, transportation and distribution already support an estimated 4 million jobs. As the U.S. and countries around the world increasingly electrify their economies, natural gas will play a key role in providing secure, clean, affordable energy for developed and, equally important, developing countries. LNG exports and the natural gas industry are vital to our national economy and national security because it supports the continually increasing demand for electricity, helps secure and maintain U.S. energy independence, is a contributor to decreasing our trade deficit, and provides reliable, secure energy to our international allies, There are few domestic exports that provide more benefits across the nation's economic, domestic, and international security than LNG.

Question 2: The Department of Energy (DOE) plays a pivotal role in the approval of non-FTA export applications. I hope that the incoming Trump administration reverses the current pause and resumes the consideration of LNG export applications as soon as possible. Have you considered creative solutions to provide business certainty, such as conditional authorizations for LNG projects that would be granted pending completion of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's review? What additional opportunities do you see for DOE to help leverage U.S. LNG to achieve energy dominance?

Response: There is no reason to continue the pause on review of non-FTA export applications. DOE already has the personnel, procedures, and rules to efficiently complete the review of both pending and future applications and to do so in way to provides regulatory certainty to applicants. The first thing that needs to happen is to support the very capable program staff to actually do their jobs, and DOE's decisions on the export applications will soon follow. Regulatory certainty and efficient, expeditious evaluation of export applications will naturally attract interest within the investment community to developing additional export capacity where it makes economic sense

Question 3: U.S. energy producers and manufacturers adhere to some of the highest environmental standards of anywhere in the world. However, they do not compete on a level playing field as many foreign competitors operate with little or no regard to environmental stewardship. Access to data on comparative product emissions intensity is crucial to crafting trade countermeasures to check countries that illegally subsidize their industry through lax environmental standards, enforcement, and compliance. As Secretary, will you commit to direct the Department of Energy to conduct a comprehensive study comparing the emissions intensity of specific goods produced in the United States with that of the same goods produced in other countries?

Response: As the EU and other countries develop regulations requiring the measurement of GHG intensity for imports, it is vital that the U.S. demonstrate through reliable data how its energy industries are leading the world in environmentally friendly and low emissions production and manufacturing processes. Doing so will support trade negotiations and help influence the rule-making process thatprotect American interests and avoid unfair discrimination against our exports.

Questions from Senator Mazie K. Hirono

Question 1: Will you commit to complying with federal ethics rules and divest yourself of all stocks that would pose a conflict of interest, even if President Trump offers you a waiver to keep your investments?

Response: In the interest of ensuring the highest standards of integrity, I have taken all actions recommended by the Office of Government Ethics – as are outlined in form OGE-278e – to ensure impartiality and reduce any conflicts of interest – real or perceived – to best serve the President if confirmed as Secretary of Energy. Upon confirmation, I will resign my position with Liberty Energy and other companies and divest my interests as soon as practicable but no later than 90 days after my confirmation.

Question 2: Do you believe the federal government should regulate and limit emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas pollutants from power plants?

Response: While regulating emissions is not the purview of the U.S. Department of Energy, I appreciate your question and look forward to discussing it further if confirmed as Secretary of Energy.

Question 3: Hawaii is uniquely vulnerable to energy disruptions. It is the most isolated island chain in the world with the highest dependence on petroleum of any state. All of the petroleum is imported, contributing to the highest power prices in the country. Hawaii's energy vulnerability affects our people, our economy, and the Department of Defense installations in our state. With the help of the Department of Energy, Hawaii is working to move from relying on imported oil for most of its power to using 100 percent renewable power by 2045. Companies in Hawaii are also seeking locally sourced, lower-carbon fuels for aviation and providing power for military installations. If you are confirmed, will you support Hawaii's efforts to become energy independent?

Response: Every region has unique resources and infrastructure that informs the best mix of energy sources to support its people, economy and security. A diverse mix of baseload and intermittent energy sources is important to avoid an undue reliance on one or only a few sources that could face disruption. I look forward to learning more about Hawaii's efforts, and efforts of every state and region to develop the best mix of energy resources to provide the most affordable reliable, secure energy to power their needs.

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Questions from Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith

Question 1: Our country is developing new energy technologies that have the potential to add significant base-load power to the grid.

1a) Can you talk about how, as Secretary, you would support the commercialization of fusion energy?

Response: I intend to evaluate fusion energy research, innovation and related work underway at the Department of Energy national laboratories, if confirmed, and I look forward to working with your office on this nascent technology.

Question 2: For decades, the Department of Energy has been a key supporter of new energy research. In particular, the Department has played a key role in supporting fusion research. However, I understand that the innovative fusion sector is approaching a working fusion energy machine – as soon as this year – and we are rapidly approaching the point where we need to prioritize commercial applications of this technology.

2a) Can you talk about how, as Secretary, you will balance the need to transition new technologies out of the research and development phase and to the deployment phase?

Response: Getting through the valley-of-death from basic research to commercialization has long been a challenge for new and emerging technologies. I look forward to learning more and sharing with you the status of fusion energy research, innovation and related work underway at the Department of Energy national laboratories if confirmed.

Question 3: One of the great energy successes we have had in recent years is in fostering public-private partnerships. These partnerships are especially critical for supporting the rapid expansion of newer energy technologies. One emerging technology I am especially excited about is fusion energy.

3a) Can you talk about how the Department of Energy can better support the development of public-private partnerships to support the commercial deployment of emerging technologies such as fusion energy?

Response: Throughout its history, the Department of Energy has funded research, development, and deployment with the private sector that has led to significant breakthroughs in energy technology and participated in public-private partnerships on energy demonstration projects. I look forward to evaluating existing public-private partnerships in technology innovation to strengthen U.S. competitiveness and energy security.

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Question 4: We have seen time-and-again the United States develop a new technology – solar panels and batteries being just the latest iterations – only for China to build out the supply chain and dominate the deployment of the technology. We are at a critical juncture right now where American companies are on the verge of building working fusion energy machines in the very near future.

4a) Can you talk about the steps you would take to ensure new technologies, such as fusion energy, that are developed in the United States also have sufficient domestic supply chains and markets?

- **Is how these technologies will remain American dominated in order to not lose the race to commercialization to China?**

Response: Strengthening America's supply chains and identifying industries and markets for new technologies is essential to protect U.S. competitiveness and intellectual property. If confirmed, I look forward to identifying ways to support our national laboratories in leading the world in emerging technology research and energy innovation. We must maintain US competitiveness in these key sectors while providing tangible economic benefits to Americans.

Question 5: I am very concerned about China moving to lock up key supply chains that are critical for our energy producers. Not only is this a significant national security threat but it also limits our ability to dominate innovative technologies.

5a) Can you discuss how, under your leadership, the Department of Energy will work individually – and on an inter-agency basis – to support the expansion of the domestic energy supply chain?

Response: I agree that the integrity and security of our nation's supply chains is an important and pressing issue of economic and national security. If confirmed, I intend to evaluate opportunities to strengthen our nation's supply chains for critical materials, increase private investment, and create economic opportunities for Americans. I intend to work closely with my colleagues under President Trump's leadership and would look forward to engaging with this committee on this issue in the future.

Question 6: We have seen a lot of coverage on reducing burdensome regulations that are slowing down energy projects.

6a) Can you talk in more detail about the specific actions you plan to take as Secretary to speed up the deployment of energy projects and reduce regulatory delays?

Response: America is blessed with abundant resources to power our economy. Yet today regulatory and permitting uncertainty has hastened investments in all sources of affordable, reliable, and secure American energy, which means higher inflation and higher energy costs. President Trump is committed to unleashing U.S. energy resources and spurring investments in necessary infrastructure to attract manufacturing supply chains back to America. If confirmed, I will work across the Department of Energy to support unleashing all forms of affordable and reliable energy – including clean energy – and fostering technology innovations.

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Question 7: The United States is an energy superpower and a key producer of both traditional and innovative energy sources. However, we face key supply chain challenges – particularly from China – in supporting the rapid development of new energy technologies.

7a) Can you talk in more detail about how the Department of Energy can better support emerging energy technologies and build out the requisite supply chains?

I agree that supply chain integrity is a serious issue. Our nation has an abundance of domestic natural resources, a dedicated workforce, and an entrepreneurial spirit. If confirmed, I intend to examine the Department of Energy's policies and programs for opportunities to support the strengthening of critical supply chains, particularly through innovation and private investment.

Question 8: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has already approved 48 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) of LNG exports, a volume equal to 50.5 percent of 2023 net supply and substantially more than exports of gasoline and crude oil. The U.S. only exports 10 percent of its gasoline, only 23 percent of crude production and imports an equivalent of 44 percent of production. For crude oil and gasoline, the U.S. has a Strategic Petroleum Reserve. There is no alternative for natural gas. Consumers are completely exposed and do not have an alternative.

EIA data proves that LNG export volumes are highest during our winter peak heating season and puts upward price pressure on natural gas and electricity. This is especially a problem when U.S. inventories are low. This happened during the winter of 2021/2022 and natural gas prices increased over 300 percent, and what is happening right now and as prices are skyrocketing.

LNG exports are insensitive to price. We both know that if a country needs natural gas to keep the lights on, there is no limit to how much they will pay. As exports increase, they import global market volatility- a phenomenon that the US market has been insulated from historically, especially when inventories are low. It seems to me that we should place the American consumer first by implementing a policy to insulate the consumer from the potential impacts of rising LNG exports. The IECA has proposed an 'LNG Inventory Policy' that has no cost to the taxpayer.

8a) Would you agree that it makes common sense to ensure that the US consumer is protected from high prices as we export more LNG? If confirmed, can I count on you to advance such as policy?

Response: Yes, and I will ensure that DOE considers reliable and valid information related to LNG export applications consistent with its legal obligations, including whether the exports proposed by an applicant are not in the public interest as required by the Natural Gas Act. Our experience has not shown that additional exports have not increased domestic prices.

Question 9: Last January, the Biden administration paused pending decisions to export liquefied natural gas (LNG) to countries with which the United States has not entered into a free trade agreement (FTA). The pause continued as the Department of Energy (DOE), which is authorized to approve the export of LNG, updated its analyses on whether LNG exports to non-FTA countries are in the "public interest." On December 17th, DOE released its updated

macroeconomic study on LNG exports and provided a 60-day comment period to inform the Department's possible utilization of the study's findings to its public interest analysis of export applications going forward.

9a) Does the U.S. have a fundamental interest in advancing the infrastructure needed to match our country's abundant natural gas supply with the international demand for energy?

Response: The vast natural gas deposits in this country cannot reach consumers, both domestic and international, without the necessary infrastructure. As natural gas is one of our country's most vital natural resources, developing that infrastructure is among our most important fundamental interests. Private investment in critical infrastructure has been suppressed in large part by the significant cost and delays of securing the dozens of permits required to even reach a final investment decision, These extraordinary costs and delays are caused by a combination of onerous rules, lengthy bureaucratic reviews, and litigation challenges not faced by investors in any other developed countries. Permitting reform is essential to the development of the sorely needed new infrastructure.

Question 10: LNG terminal on Elba Island in Chatham, Georgia is a bidirectional facility that has delivered natural gas capacity, which otherwise would not have been available, on a short-term basis during peak demand periods for the reliability and resiliency of electricity generators/utilities and LDCs.

10a) Did DOE's pause impact the reliability contributions of LNG export facilities and other interstate pipeline infrastructure to transport domestic natural gas supply during winter events?

Response: DOE's pause in considering LNG export applications created unnecessary regulatory uncertainty and undoubtedly slowed or even stopped investment decisions for new facilities under consideration, including development of both LNG export facilities and the domestic pipeline infrastructure necessary to supply the natural gas to the export facilities. New pipeline infrastructure, even when developed primarily to supply an LNG facility, interconnects with the wider natural gas pipeline system. Where there are LNG export facilities co-located with LNG import facilities, there would be opportunities to import natural gas during periods of severe domestic shortages.

10b) How did this regulatory delay further complicate the speed and certainty of natural gas infrastructure permitting processes that allow for export capabilities?
Response:

Response: Although it is difficult to know and measure the full extent of the DOE's decision to pause its consideration of pending and new applications, there is no doubt that the regulatory uncertainty essentially paralyzed the progress of certain projects, likely led investors to seek different opportunities, and prevented or delayed new sale and purchase agreements with international LNG customers.

10c) Don't natural gas infrastructure permitting delays also hinder the ability for project developers and operators to keep workers under contract?

Response: There is no question that permitting delays hinder and even prevent project developers from entering contracts with equipment suppliers and contractors necessary to complete a project. Generally, workers do not get paid if they are not working, particularly skilled tradesmen, and they will seek reliable work elsewhere.

10d) In addition to building new infrastructure capacity, aren't workers needed to maintain and update existing assets to ensure safe transportation of natural gas?

Response: Yes - while a construction workforce will exceed in numbers the operations workforce, operating jobs at LNG facilities and pipelines require a skilled workforce with high-paying jobs that provide significant economic development often in relatively rural parts of the country.

Question 11: Administration Efforts

11a) How does the incoming administration plan to assess comments submitted on DOE's 2024 study, which contains findings that align with those in the Department's 2018 economic report, to inform policy decisions, and more importantly, resume review of LNG permits?

Response: I will ensure that DOE considers reliable and valid information related to LNG export applications consistent with its legal obligations, including the information submitted during the public comment period, to determine whether the exports proposed by an applicant are not in the public interest as required by the Natural Gas Act.

11b) What measures will DOE implement to ensure the legal durability of LNG export permits? And how do you plan to address potential legal challenges that may arise?

Response: By complying with the statutory requirements for DOE's consideration of export applications, including under the Administrative Procedure Act, the Natural Gas Act, and National Environmental Policy Act, export authorizations granted by DOE will be durable to potential legal challenges.

11c) How do you intend to reconcile the growth of LNG exports, which the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts will exceed the all-time high in 2024 later this year, with the necessity of maintaining a stable and resilient domestic electricity grid?

Response: I am not aware of any forecast that suggests domestic natural gas supplies cannot meet demand for both domestic consumption and LNG exports, including the projected increase in LNG exports. Should I be confirmed and there be future events where LNG exports risk short-term price spikes, I would consider any appropriate, lawful, and proportional use of powers available to the Secretary of Energy to mitigate those effects.

Question 12: Global Energy Markets

12a) Didn't DOE's pause harm sources of international energy supply that are competitive, accessible, and environmentally favorable?

Response: Although it is difficult to know and measure the full extent of the DOE's decision to pause its consideration of pending and new applications, there is no doubt that the regulatory uncertainty essentially paralyzed the progress of certain projects, likely led investors to seek different opportunities, and prevented or delayed new sale and purchase agreements with international LNG customers, some of whom looked to alternative suppliers from different countries.

12b) How does the administration plan to monitor global market dynamics related to LNG exports and adjust policies or permits to maintain a competitive edge?

Response: If I am confirmed as Secretary, I will ensure that DOE constantly monitors global market dynamics and regularly evaluates is permitting policies to ensure DOE export authorizations, to the extent legally feasible, do not disadvantage U.S. LNG exporters in the highly competitive global market.

12c) What long-term strategies does the Department envision taking to maintain a strong and sustainable LNG export market?

Response: The key to maintaining a strong and sustainable LNG export market is an efficient and predictable permitting process, with reliable and sustainable long-term permits that will withstand legal challenges, which I will ensure. Armed with predictable regulatory certainty, the U.S. entrepreneurial spirit, ingenuity, and commercial sophistication will make U.S. LNG highly competitive in global markets.

12d) How will the administration ensure that efforts to strengthen the LNG export market do not compromise domestic energy needs or grid reliability, particularly during critical supply periods?

Response: I will ensure that DOE considers reliable and valid information related to LNG export applications consistent with its legal obligations, including whether the exports proposed by an applicant are not in the public interest as required by the Natural Gas Act, which would include the potential effects of exports on domestic uses of natural gas.

Question 13: Mr. Wright, the magnitude of energy demand that we are experiencing is extraordinary. We are going to need every arrow in the quiver to meet that demand if we hope to

stay competitive globally, and that seems to me that it would include all types of nuclear energy, most especially large nuclear reactors. I also understand that partnerships between developers, customers, and the federal government will be key to getting the next handful of large nuclear units built.

13a) Do you agree that development of new nuclear plants is critical to secure protect America's national and financial security?

Response: Yes.

13b) Are you prepared to work with Congress on ways to mitigate the risk of new nuclear development?

Response: Yes.

Question 14: In January 2024, the Biden Administration enacted its misguided LNG export permitting pause, putting the energy security of the U.S. and our allies at risk. In the year following this pause, our allies in Europe bought record amounts of Russian LNG and the Middle East became the leader in greenlighting new LNG projects.

14a) Do you plan to continue this pause?

Response: There is no reason to continue the pause on review of non-FTA export applications and if I am confirmed DOE will immediately begin the regular and efficient consideration of all pending and new applications for LNG exports.

14b) What do you believe the role of U.S. LNG is in ensuring global energy security?

Response: Natural gas has already proven to be a key component of efforts to reduce GHG emissions both domestically and globally. Natural gas is also a low-cost fuel for reliable, dispatchable electricity generation. In addition, the vast amounts of natural gas deposits in the United States are large enough to supply domestic and international demand for years to come without material increases in the cost. Natural gas production, transportation and distribution already support an estimated 4 million jobs. As the US and countries around the world increasingly electrify their economies, natural gas will play a key role in providing secure, clean, affordable energy for developed and, equally important, developing countries. LNG exports and the natural gas industry are vital to our national economy and national security because it supports the continually increasing demand for electricity, helps secure and maintain U.S. energy independence, is a contributor to decreasing our trade deficit, and provides reliable, secure energy to our international allies, There are few domestic exports that provide more benefits across the nation's economic, domestic, and international security than LNG.

14c) As a longtime leader in the U.S. oil and gas industry, what role do you believe U.S. LNG plays in maintaining U.S. leadership on the world stage?

Response: As stated in the previous answer, natural gas contributes to U.S. energy independence, with strengthens its position on the world state, is a leading contributor to decreasing GHG emissions both domestically and globally, offers a low-cost fuel for reliable, dispatchable electricity generation, particularly important to developing countries, provides a reliable, low-cost, clean energy source for our allied countries. and is a major contributor to decreasing our national deficit. To repeat, there are few domestic products and exports that provide more benefits across the nation's economic, domestic, and international security than LNG.

Question 15: Mr. Wright, commercial refrigeration manufacturers form an important part of our nation's economy, including billions in economic output and value-add. Beyond the manufacturing jobs associated with commercial refrigeration equipment, the products themselves support key industries like independent commercial grocers that play an important role in the daily lives of Mississippians.

Response: Unfortunately, at the end of last year, DOE established new energy conservation standards for commercial refrigeration equipment over the objections and significant concerns submitted by a broad array of industry stakeholders. According to data and analysis submitted by industry groups, the new "energy efficiency" standards are not technologically feasible nor are they readily available to implement within the mandated time period. The new standards will impose a substantial cost to manufacturers and ultimately grocers and American consumers.

15a) Mr. Wright, if you are confirmed to be Secretary of Energy will you commit to working with me and members of this committee to re-assess and rollback unreasonable and harmful regulations promulgated in the name of "energy efficiency," including DOE's standards for commercial refrigeration equipment?

Response: Yes, I will work with you and your staff on this.

Question 16: The 2nd Trump Administration will usher in a new era of American energy dominance fueled by innovative technologies, including carbon capture that can be used for enhanced oil recovery and manufacturing other fuels and energy products. Carbon capture has also been an opportunity for bipartisanship in Congress, including the 45Q tax credit as well as historic investments and regulatory support in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

16a) As Secretary and National Energy Council Co-Chair, do you commit to working with Congress and industry to continue supporting the carbon capture industry, including the DOE's DAC Hubs Program, and improving the permitting process for American energy projects?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about DOE's work on Direct Air Capture Hubs and understanding your views on the best ways to lead the world in energy innovation and technology breakthroughs.

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Question 17: Mr. Wright, the need for more effective, reliable energy sources is critical for continued economic growth. Having access to all energy sources and having a resilient grid are vital to the success of our communities.

17a) How do you view the role of the Department of Energy in ensuring states have a good partner for energy system buildouts and grid resiliency?

Response: I am committed to working with the states to ensure a smooth and efficient buildout for grid resiliency.

Questions from Senator Angus S. King

Question 1: As a first step in addressing the spent nuclear fuel (SNF) storage issue, would you consider re-establishing the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM) and the position of Director of OCRWM, as required in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act?

Response: I will consider that option and look forward to discussing your views on this further.

Question 2: Are there additional changes to the Nuclear Waste Policy Act currently under discussion that would lead to a more integrated and collaborative siting effort for the ultimate disposal of all the nation's nuclear waste forms – including new nuclear – with a priority for SNF stranded at decommissioned reactor sites, like Maine Yankee in Wiscasset Maine?

Response: If confirmed, I will examine this siting issue to see if there are efficiencies that can be achieved.

Question 3: What are your thoughts on Congress providing sustained annual access to the nearly $50 billion dollars in the Nuclear Waste Fund that was collected from the nation's electric ratepayers for the intended purpose of funding a national integrated nuclear waste management program?

Response: I intend to seek further legal and policy analysis to determine whether the funds could be used for this purpose since the funds were collected and intended for the development of final disposition of the waste.

Questions from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: During the hearing, you refused to acknowledge the failures of the Yucca Mountain Project and recognize it as an unworkable site for our nation's nuclear waste – despite President-Elect Trump's opposition to the Project.

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If confirmed, would you continue efforts at the Department to establish a consent-based siting solution for our nation's nuclear waste? If so, would you honor the definition of consent that was recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future and my Nuclear Waste Informed Consent Act?

Response: Thank you for your question. As we discussed when we met, the people of Nevada are not in favor of Yucca Mountain, and thus President Trump and I do not support Yucca Mountain as a waste repository. I believe we need local support to open a long-term waste storage site.

If the State of Nevada is opposed to Yucca Mountain, would you proceed with the siting process?

Response: As the President has stated, he will not pursue the Yucca Mountain project.

Question 2: Mr. Wright – It has been reported that your company, Liberty Energy, Inc., has been sued a handful of times in federal court by current or former employees who alleged racial discrimination or harassment. Can you please provide a description of these allegations, as well as any actions that you or your company have taken to ensure the future safety and equity of your employees?

Response: As a lifelong entrepreneur, I have started several companies and led a 5,000+ workforce and culture that is committed to equal treatment for all and a workplace free of racial, sexual and all harassment. At Liberty Energy, we had personnel that acted outside of our company's code of ethics, and we took immediate action to remove them. I intend to actively cultivate a positive and supportive culture at the Department of Energy to ensure the success of the President's energy mission.

Question 3: Mr. Wright, in addition to your nomination to lead the Department of Energy, you have also been chosen to co-lead the newly dubbed "National Energy Council" with the nominee to lead the Secretary of the Interior, Governor Doug Burgum.

Can you commit to providing transparency on the potential conflict of interests of any participant in the Council's activities?

Response: I will follow the guidance of the Department's designated ethics officer to remove any real or perceived conflicts of interest.

Question 4: Mr. Wright – you have said that one of your priorities is lowering costs for working families. Nevada has received $3.3 million in early-stage R&D funding via ARPA-E since 2009. Further, DOE's Office of State and Community Energy Programs has invested nearly $15 million in the state since 2015.

Do you think cutting or eliminating funding for these government programs would lower energy costs for Nevada families?

Response: I have not been briefed on this issue, and I believe it needs to be analyzed.

Question 5: Companies across Nevada represent vital parts of our supply chains – contributing to our national defense and energy independence. Accordingly, the Department has invested over $5 billion into Nevada companies in recent years, from lithium processing to battery recycling and manufacturing, in order to help strengthen our domestic industries and global competitiveness.
Your written testimony mentioned the importance of U.S. innovation and American manufacturing success – so would you categorize these Nevada investments as critical and important?

Response: Yes.

The Department of Energy's Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chains Office (MESC) and Loan Programs Office (LPO) have played a major role by supporting these efforts in Nevada through grants and loans. If confirmed, will you commit to maintaining investments in these key DOE programs?

Response: Manufacturing and energy supply chains are critical to our economy. I support efforts that will allow for the continued growth and restoring of manufacturing jobs in America.

As you do so, can you please describe whether, and how, your department will continue to implement strong labor standards on investments the department is making in manufacturing and energy projects?

Response: Yes.

Upon learning about the local benefits of these DOE programs to projects in Nevada, can you commit to be an honest and direct advocate for DOE programs and their recipients during discussions of cutting or eliminating programs or funding at the department?

Response: The State of Nevada is important, and I will do my best to appropriately balance the interests at stake in any such discussions that may occur.

Question 6: Per the DOE's assessment, in response to concurrent transformations in technologies – such as artificial intelligence (AI), data center expansion, new domestic manufacturing, and electrification in different sectors, the United States is returning to a period of sharply rising electricity demand.

If confirmed, how would you look to tackle this challenge – in terms of scientific innovation, China and global competition, and energy demand needs? Would you prioritize this issue at the Department, and as part of the National Energy Council?

Response: This is an important issue, and I believe that large baseload power, such as nuclear energy, can help meet our energy demands.

Are there ways that DOE can better leverage existing assets, such as its 17 national labs and partnerships with external organizations, to support building the national AI capability?

Response: Developing the nation's AI capacity is an important issue. If confirmed, I intend to examine ways that the Department can assist our nation's competitiveness in this important global industry.

How would you work with utilities to prioritize the development and deployment of solutions to meet growing energy demand from data center expansion while maintaining affordability for U.S. consumers?

Response: This is an important subject, and I intend to work to appropriately balance these interests while emphasizing the need to ensure energy is affordable throughout the country.

Would you be supportive of data center flexibility through on-site power generation and storage solutions, so data centers can be a grid asset rather than a burden?
Response: Yes.

Given the unprecedented growth in electricity demand and the lack of transmission needed to serve that energy use, what should the Department do to accelerate the use technologies, such as carbon composite core advanced conductors, that will increase the capacity and efficiency of the existing grid along the current rights of way?

Response: Yes, that is one potential solution but there are additional opportunities which should be investigated.

Question 7: Clean transportation plays a pivotal role in achieving energy independence by significantly reducing reliance on foreign fossil fuels, allowing the nation to source more of its transportation energy domestically through alternative fuels and efficient vehicles.

As of January 1, 2024, there were over 286 million passenger cars and light trucks in the United States. At that time, alternative fuel vehicles (EVs and hybrids) accounted for nearly 12.5 million vehicles in use.

Is EV and hybrid technology enhancing energy security and decreasing vulnerability to price fluctuations in the global oil market?

Response: I do not believe that finding is consistent with the data.

Question 8: If confirmed, how will you ensure that your agency respects the federal trust responsibility to Tribes, particularly through prioritizing budget requests and federal funding allocation, staffing, and policy implementation?

Response: I fully respect the federal trust obligations to tribes and Department of Energy, should I be confirmed, will work with them as partners.

Additionally, how will you measure and report progress in advancing the needs of Native communities, and how will you ensure that these efforts are transparent and accountable to Congress and to the communities you serve?

Response: I have not yet been briefed on these issues, but I appreciate the importance of the goals you are referencing.

Questions from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: Over the past four years, the Office of Fossil Energy and Carbon Management, the Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chains Office, and the Loan Programs Office have made significant progress in supporting domestic critical mineral projects essential for securing supply chains currently dominated by China. This includes investigating financial mechanisms and price support to ensure domestic mineral processing projects get off the ground. If confirmed, how do you plan to build on this progress, and what role do you see for the Department of Energy in bolstering American critical mineral supply chains? The current Administration has been advancing a "Mines of the Future" initiative - partnering with best in class academic institutions like Colorado School of Mines - which would be informed by industry input and designed to responsibly recover minerals that are deeper or harder to extract economically and with minimal impact. Will you work with me to make sure this program is maintained and ideally expanded?

Response: You have outlined some important goals, and I am glad to work with you to implement and enhance the efforts as you describe.

Question 2: DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) has funded the development of next-generation energy companies in the areas of advanced nuclear, fusion, and enhanced geothermal. Many companies have directly benefited from this program including three that you have invested in. How will you support ARPA-E going forward?

Response: I will evaluate the work of ARPA-E, which plays an important role in helping to commercialize new technologies, and I look forward to working with you and your staff on advancing all domestic forms of affordable, reliable and secure energy.

Question 3: DOE's Loan Programs Office has financed over a $50 billion portfolio of innovative energy projects, including for advanced fossil, nuclear, and critical materials projects. The office has a fantastic track record of creating jobs while minimizing financial losses.
Will you continue to advance LPO's mission and honor the commitments that have already been made? What role do you envision the DOE in helping bring these new technologies to the market?

Response: We will be examining and analyzing the efforts of LPO to ensure that loans are furthering statutory objectives in the interests of the American people.

Question 4: We are facing increasing electricity demand from datacenters, manufacturing, and electrification. Whether you support gas, renewables, or nuclear, we must update our grid to keep the lights on and costs low. An advanced grid should not be a partisan issue – oil and gas needs it, AI companies need it, Americans need it. DOE has made great progress investing in transmission projects through the bipartisan infrastructure law. Will you commit to honoring the financial commitments that have already been made?

Response: We will be examining and analyzing the efforts of LPO to ensure that loans are furthering statutory objectives in the interests of the American people.

Question 5: FERC estimates electricity demand will grow by 128 GW nationwide in the next 5 years. Even if we build enough generation tomorrow to meet this demand, we don't have sufficient transmission to transport it. Permitting red tape, convoluted planning processes, and disagreements on who pays for transmission lines have ground new construction to a halt. It currently takes 7-11 years to build new large transmission lines in the United States. How will DOE help address the urgent transmission bottlenecks today that are inhibiting economic growth and U.S. leadership on AI?

Response: This is an important issue that I intend to be briefed about in order to determine how to meet the growing needs and demands on the grid due to growth in data centers, AI and other elements.

Questions from Senator Alex Padilla

Question 1: From coast to coast, extreme weather events have increased in both frequency and intensity, making power outages more and more common. Whether it be extreme heat in the summer or freezing temperatures in the winter, our nation's electric grid is frequently tested, and in many cases, it has not been able to weather the storm. Grid instability disrupts the lives of millions of Americans and costs the U.S. economy billions of dollars by not only impeding emergency services and temporarily closing schools and businesses, but in some cases causing massive and dangerous wildfires. This is a bipartisan issue, and as we discussed yesterday, I worked with Senator Cornyn to successfully include billions of dollars for grid hardening in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Mr. Wright, this is an issue I've been working on since I got to the Senate. Will you commit to prioritizing grid hardening and continuing the funding through the Grid Deployment Office?

Response: Strengthening, modernizing, and protecting the electricity grid and other critical infrastructure is a top priority. I support the objective of grid hardening and look forward to learning more about efforts underway at the Department of Energy or other ways to accomplish this important goal.

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Question 2: Last year, DOE announced the results of the most comprehensive analysis to date quantifying the domestic lithium resources in California's Salton Sea region. This analysis conducted by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that with expected technology advances, the Salton Sea region's total resources could produce more than 3,400 kilotons of lithium. The analysis confirms what we've long known in California - the Salton Sea region has significant potential as a domestic source of the critical minerals needed for batteries. California's Lithium Valley will deliver economic benefits to not only California, but to the entire nation by reducing our reliance on foreign countries, particularly China, for critical minerals. Mr. Wright, what is your plan to develop domestic sources of lithium and ensure we are not reliant on foreign sources? Will you join me on a tour of Lithium Valley?

Response: Critical minerals are essential to American innovation and infrastructure. The company I started made investments in sodium-ion battery technology and I know firsthand the importance of developing domestic supplies of minerals to protect our national security and global competitiveness. I look forward to working with you and your staff on this issue and learning more and visiting Lithium Valley with you.

Question 3: One of the issues all of us agree on is that our nation is going to need to generate significantly more electricity in the coming years, and we are going to need more transmission capacity to transport those electrons to where we need them. To meet this demand, our grid will need to meet 21st-century challenges with 21st-century solutions, like reconductoring. Rewiring our existing transmission lines with state-of-the-art carbon fiber or aluminum alloy materials has the potential to deliver twice the current of same-sized conventional steel and aluminum transmission cables. And that's all without having to build brand new lines. Mr. Wright, how will you work to ensure DOE uses every tool in its tool box, including grid-enhancing technologies like reconductoring, to meet growing demand, and if confirmed will you commit to working with me on this issue?

Response: I welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to strengthen, modernize, and protect America's electricity grid and other critical infrastructure to meet growing demand.

Question 4: California was the first state to officially launch a Hydrogen Hub (ARCHES), which will facilitate a network of hydrogen production sites to catalyze the use of hydrogen throughout California. California's hub is part of a larger initiative to accelerate the development and deployment of hydrogen projects across the country in an effort to increase our energy independence and develop entirely new industries and technologies. Mr. Wright, if confirmed, will you continue to support funding for this critical hub that is essential for the development and advancement of hydrogen technology in the United States? Also, how will you ensure that the department can continue funding projects, like ARCHES, that are vital to our global energy competitiveness?

Response: I will work to foster the continued leadership of DOE in supporting the development and successful implementation of energy technologies that deliver all forms of affordable, reliable and secure American energy – including hydrogen. If confirmed, I look forward to

learning more about DOE's work on Hydrogen Hubs and understanding your views on the best ways to lead the world in energy innovation and technology breakthroughs.

Question 5: DOE's Tribal Energy Finance Program has the potential to continue to drive energy development in rural parts of the country. The Loan Programs Office is currently evaluating approximately $5 billion in Tribal Energy Finance Program applications. Mr. Wright, if confirmed, will you commit to maintaining the Tribal Energy Finance Program to ensure that Tribes can utilize the financing tools to lower energy costs, create jobs, and attract businesses to its reservations and Tribal lands? Also, despite the potential of this program, many applicants have been frustrated with the pace of loan approvals. Will you commit to working to improve the program and accelerate the approvals issued?

Response: I believe tribes and other groups with good ideas should be eligible for the program. I understand your frustration with the pace of approvals, and I would be glad to work with you to determine how decisions could be accelerated.