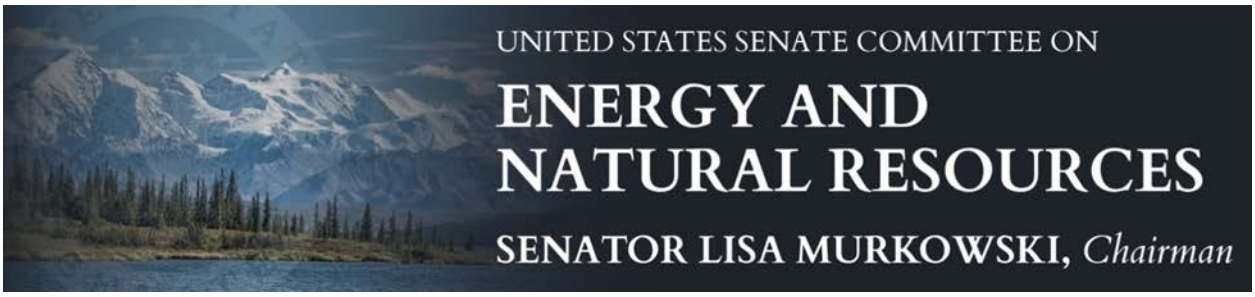


**Opening Statement**
**Oversight Hearing on Advanced Nuclear Technologies**
**Chairman Lisa Murkowski**
**May 17, 2016**

Good morning, everyone. The Committee will come to order as we begin our hearing on the status of innovative advanced nuclear technologies.

We are holding this hearing because nuclear energy must be a national priority. It provides about 20 percent of our nation's electricity, and 63 percent of our emissions-free electricity. It is safe and extremely reliable. When cold winters hit the Northeast and the flow of natural gas is restricted, nuclear plants continue to provide electricity to residents, literally saving lives. When the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining, nuclear is still providing essential baseload capacity. For any number of good reasons, nuclear has to remain part of the energy mix.

In addition to supporting the current nuclear fleet, I have long supported the research, development, and deployment of next generation nuclear technologies – including small modular reactors, micro-reactors, Generation-four reactors, and future fusion reactors. That support appears to be growing here in Congress, which is a good thing for our country.

We are entering a new era for nuclear power. The opportunity for innovation in nuclear technologies has not been this great since the 1960s. Despite the many difficult challenges associated with full deployment – technical, financial, bureaucratic, and license-related – there is unprecedented interest from both the private and public sectors. We can help by removing barriers and optimizing our public-private partnerships.

Despite the clear benefits of nuclear energy, the industry is also at a crossroads. The current operating fleet faces a number of challenges, due to political decisions or state market designs and regulations that skew the value of nuclear to the grid. Moreover, the President's greenhouse gas regulations do not value the contribution of nuclear on a level footing with other sources of emissions-free energy.

In order to facilitate the emergence of advanced nuclear technologies, we added the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act, sponsored by Senator Crapo, as an amendment to our broad, bipartisan energy bill. It was adopted by a vote of 87 to 4, highlighting the value placed on nuclear innovation on both sides of the aisle. The House has passed a nearly identical bill, and

we hope that when signed into law, it will be a valuable step in getting advanced nuclear technologies to market.

As these technologies are developed, they will face further challenges. To give one example, they will have to navigate a complicated and expensive NRC licensing process as they come closer to deployment. I am pleased to have joined as a cosponsor of Senator Inhofe's bipartisan bill, the Nuclear Energy Innovation Modernization Act. In many ways, that bill complements the provisions within our energy bill. It helps reform the NRC in smart ways, without compromising safety. I'm hopeful it will be reported quickly out of the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Beyond new legislation, we must also continue our fiscally responsible support for nuclear research and development. In that vein, I was pleased that we were also able to increase the authorizations for both the Office of Science and ARPA-E within our energy bill.

I believe that removing bureaucratic barriers to public-private partnerships, reforming the licensing structure, and continuing responsible funding for nuclear science RD&D will help drive these innovative technologies to revolutionize the industry and provide robust economic growth.

Our nation deployed the first commercial nuclear power plants and our regulatory structure is still considered the gold standard. Our universities and National Labs are world leaders in education and research. And I see advanced reactors as the next chapter of America's leadership in this field.

This is critical – because we must remain the "go-to" country for nuclear know-how, especially as many foreign nations increase investment and try to challenge our dominance in this industry. Our nation must continue to be the major player on the world stage for nuclear energy, and we must be able to deploy our innovative advanced reactors here at home.

I am pleased to welcome our esteemed panel of witnesses. We have representatives from a great cross-section of advanced reactor technologies at different stages of commercialization, a national laboratory that has been a nuclear leader for decades, and a utility that has consistently supported current and advanced nuclear technologies.

I welcome all of you here today. And with that, I'll turn to Ranking Member Cantwell.

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