

U.S. House Advanced Nuclear Bills Garner Plaudits from Nuclear Energy Industry Panel

The U.S. Nuclear Industry Council (USNIC) praised the House Energy and Commerce Committee on advancing four bills "to address key challenges facing America's nuclear energy industry at a hearing this week on legislation addressing development, regulation and competitiveness of advanced nuclear energy technologies."

The bills included three discussion drafts: Advanced Nuclear Fuel Availability Act; Nuclear Energy Competitiveness; and a Pilot Program for Micro-Reactors as well as H.R. 1320, Nuclear Utilization of Keynote Energy Act.

The Council's views were provided in testimony presented by URENCO USA, Inc. President Melissa C. Mann, a member of the USNIC, before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy chaired by Michigan Congressman Fred Upton. Illinois Congressman Bobby Rush serves as the ranking member. At the hearing, Upton said the bills "will move."

In her witness statement, Mann said: On behalf the Council, we salute the full Committee and this Subcommittee's laser focus on sustaining the current fleet and propelling advanced nuclear energy as well as development of critical new infrastructure. These initiatives include U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) oversight and modernization, an updated Nuclear Waste Policy Act Amendments and accelerated nuclear energy innovation.

"To this end, we welcome the multi-faceted initiatives proposed by the suite of four bills under discussion today as a means of enhancing these goals. In general we support the objectives inherent in H.R. 1320 in enhancing NRC licensing surety and fee reform. Similarly, we support the thrust of the discussion draft to streamline the DOE's Part 810 export review procedures. We have provided specific enhancements to Rep. Johnson on this draft which are absolutely pivotal to U.S. exports and jobs."

"We applaud as well the discussion draft to require the Secretary of Energy to develop a pilot program to site, construct and operate 'micro-reactors' at critical government facilities. Along with Gen 3+ reactors, SMRs and non-light water SMRs, micro-reactors can be a workhorse to provide resilient power for national security grid requirements as well as the commercial market in the U.S. and globally. We particularly applaud the currently-entitled 'Advanced Nuclear Fuel Availability Act' and its efforts to drive development of a new fuel supply chain needed to support critical activities, including development of advanced technologies."

Noting "there is a broad community of users who stand to benefit from High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HA-LEU) supply, Mann said: Three critical factors underpin the

further development of this new U.S. fuel cycle: Firstly, it is imperative that enrichment, conversion and fabrication capabilities be licensed and developed on concurrent schedules. Secondly, the licensing framework needs to support development of the HA-LEU fuel cycle. Moreover, the regulator needs to have sufficient resources to support timely, contemporaneous licensing reviews. Finally, companies making investments in HA-LEU facilities need to be sufficiently assured that appropriate return on these expenditures is viable."

She concluded: "A consortium-based approach involving the full gamut of the user community - in partnership with the DOE - to purchase HA-LEU materials and to develop a schedule for full cost recovery as articulated in the 'Advanced Nuclear Fuel Availability Act' would be a significant step in providing such assurance."

"In summary, we welcome the timely and crucial focus on increasing the competitiveness of the U.S. nuclear energy industry and facilitating the development of advanced nuclear technologies. The multiple initiatives proposed by the four bills under discussion today advance discussion on improvements that can be made," Mann said.

An opening government panel included DOE Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Nuclear Energy Ed McGinnis and National Nuclear Security Administration Deputy Administration for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation Brent Park. In addition to Mann, industry witnesses included former NRC Commissioner and Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP partner Jeffrey S. Merrifield on behalf of ClearPath Action and Director of Research and Development for Strategy, Advanced Nuclear, and Crosscutting Technology for Southern Company Nick Irvin.

URENCO, USA, the owner and operator of the U.S.'s only operating uranium enrichment facility. URENCO, a leading centrifuge technology provider, is also involved in development of a micro-reactor - the U-Battery, a 10 MWt high-temperature gas-cooled reactor.

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Additional information on the hearing can be found here:
<https://energycommerce.house.gov/news/press-release/subenergy-explores-legislation-to-modernize-does-nuclear-energy-technologies/>

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About the USNIC

The United States Nuclear Industry Council (USNIC) is the leading U.S. business consortium advocate for nuclear energy and promotion of the American supply chain globally. Composed of nearly 90 companies USNIC represents the "Who's Who" of the nuclear supply chain community, including key utility movers, technology developers, construction engineers, manufacturers and service providers. USNIC encompasses eight working groups and select task forces. For more information visit www.usnic.org.