



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Media Contact: Zachary Kurz
(202) 225-6371

Statement of Energy Subcommittee Chairman Randy Weber (R-Texas)

Full Committee Markup:

H.R. 4084, the *Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act*

Chairman Weber: Good morning. I want to thank Ranking Member Johnson and Chairman Smith for cosponsoring H.R. 4084, the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act, and for their leadership in gathering support for nuclear energy R&D. It is an honor to work with fellow Texans to guide research that will keep America safe, globally competitive, and support innovation in our economy. I would also like to thank other Science Committee members who have cosponsored this bill, and encourage other members to support this important legislation.

The Science Committee has spent over a year examining U.S. nuclear energy policy in preparation for this legislation. The Energy Subcommittee has held hearings on supercomputing, advanced nuclear energy technology, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the DOE Energy Innovation Hubs. Witnesses from the national labs, universities, and the private sector have testified in support of various reforms and policy outlined in this bill.

By taking our time, working together, and listening to all the relevant stakeholders, we have been able to develop a bipartisan bill with extensive support. I'd like to introduce the following support letters into the record from the American Nuclear Society, U.S. Nuclear Infrastructure Council, Bipartisan Policy Center, Texas A&M, University of Michigan, University of Wisconsin, MIT, General Atomics, the John Heinz Professor of Management at the Harvard Business School, Joe Lassiter, and Dr. Burton Richter, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1976.

This legislation provides important policy direction for the DOE Office of Nuclear Energy. First, we provide DOE with statutory direction to leverage its supercomputing infrastructure for modeling and simulation capabilities to develop advanced fission and fusion reactors.

Second, the bill lays out a clear timeline and statutory guidance for DOE to complete a research reactor that will allow for materials and fuels R&D to take place in the United States. Currently this type of research – which requires access to fast neutrons – is only accessible for civilian use in Russia. While modeling and simulation can accelerate R&D, this research must ultimately be validated through a physical source. The versatile neutron source under Section 6 of H.R. 4084 will enable this vital research.

Third, this legislation provides DOE with statutory direction to use its authority to enable the national labs to partner with the private sector to construct and operate reactor prototypes at DOE sites and to leverage expertise from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Because nuclear reactors are expensive and highly regulated, designing first-of-a-kind reactors requires a blend of creative freedom for engineers testing new designs, but assurance of safety throughout the process. DOE sites, particularly the DOE national labs, can provide a unique environment that safely allows for this kind of creative testing and development for advanced nuclear technology.

America must maintain our R&D capabilities, and continue to develop cutting edge nuclear technology here at home. Without the prioritization outlined in this bill, we'll lose the ability to develop innovative nuclear technology and be left importing reactor designs from overseas. Right now, we have the best nuclear engineers and manufacturing capacity in the world. America's export economy is a key to our global strength and this bill will provide a long term plan to ensure that we do not lose our talent.

Even more importantly, this bill will maintain America's capability to influence security and proliferation standards around the world as more developing nations explore nuclear energy. As a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I am constantly reminded of the need for American leadership in a dangerous world. H.R. 4084 makes it clear that the United States is committed to advancing this critical area of technology.

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