



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

Chairman Weber: Good morning and welcome to today's Energy Subcommittee hearing on H.R. 4084, the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act.

First, I would like to thank Ranking Member Johnson and Chairman Smith for cosponsoring this bill with me. It is an honor to work with fellow Texans to establish policies that keep America globally competitive, support innovation in our economy, and promote national security goals. I would also like to thank the other original cosponsors from the Science Committee.

As the Energy Subcommittee's legislative business for 2015 draws to a close, I'd like to take a few minutes to review this year's hearing record to explain how we got to where we are.

In January, the very first subcommittee hearing was titled "Super Computing and American Technology Leadership." That title pretty much sums up what we intend to accomplish with H.R. 4084. 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. In May, we heard from witnesses representing Argonne National Lab and General Atomics testifying on this type of research infrastructure that *enables* research to happen. In June, the Director of the DOE Energy Innovation Hub for modeling and simulation, known as CASL (pronounced "Castle"), explained how modeling and simulation can eliminate simplifying assumptions to accelerate R&D, but this research must be validated through a physical source, which is precisely what the versatile neutron source under Section 6 of H.R. 4084 will enable.

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 while leveraging expertise from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. On the technology side, this is a simple concept. Engineers require a certain degree of freedom to bring creative ideas from conception to prototype. Nuclear reactors, however, are expensive and highly regulated, which tends to cause problems for the folks trying to design first-of-a-kind reactors that could actually increase safety in the long run.

This legislation is of critical importance. We have to maintain our R&D capabilities to develop cutting edge nuclear technology here in America or in the not-too-distant future, we'll be importing reactors from overseas. Furthermore, we cannot afford to lose engineering and manufacturing jobs in the nuclear

sector when we have the best talent in the world right now. America's export economy is a key to our global strength and this bill will provide a long term plan to ensure that we that we do not lose our talent.

Perhaps of greater importance is the need to maintain America's capability to influence security and proliferation standards around the world as more developing nations turn to nuclear energy. As a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I am constantly reminded about the dangers our nation faces in this turbulent world. H.R. 4084 makes it clear that the United States will not turn a blind eye to this critical area of technology.

I thank this distinguished panel of witnesses for their attendance today and I look forward to their testimony.

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