

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Alan Grayson (D-FL)
Subcommittee on Energy
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Licensing Process
Energy Subcommittee Hearing

July 29, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Weber for holding this hearing today, and thank you to Chairman Burns for testifying this morning.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has a vital role to play in ensuring the health and safety of the American people. The importance of its role in protecting the environment, particularly in a time where recent events have led some to question the future of nuclear power, cannot be overstated. I look forward to learning more this morning about how the NRC is applying lessons learned during the Fukushima disaster in 2011, and lessons learned during the premature degradation of parts of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in 2012, as well as similar incidents around the world.

Today, I hope you will discuss the potential for new, advanced nuclear technologies that address the safety, waste, and cost issues associated with previous generations of nuclear power plants. Given that the bulk of NRC's expertise and resources are focused on licensing, and ensuring the safety of, current light water reactors, the path for developing, commercializing, and licensing newer, and potentially far superior, technologies is less clear. Should a breakthrough in nuclear fusion be achieved within the next decade, the path toward licensing a fusion reactor is murky, at best.

I look forward to working with you, Chairman Burns, to address these issues as they arise. Advanced fission, and especially fusion energy, technologies have the potential to radically change the world's energy landscape. They have the potential to meet our energy needs while significantly reducing the threat of climate disruption. We must give these new energy options the chance to prove themselves while also ensuring that we are not compromising the health and safety of our citizens in any way.

Thank you, again, for being here, Mr. Burns. I look forward to hearing your testimony, and I yield back the balance of my time.