UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
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WRITTEN STATEMENT
BY DAVID A. WRIGHT, CHAIRMAN
UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor to serve as Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), and I am grateful for the trust placed in me to continue leading this exceptional agency.

My colleagues and I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) licensing and oversight activities.

The NRC was established to regulate commercial nuclear power plants; research and test reactors; nuclear fuel cycle facilities; and radioactive materials used in medicine, academia, and industry. The agency also regulates the transportation, storage, and disposal of radioactive materials and waste; the export and import of radioactive materials, nuclear reactors, and fuel cycle facilities; and the export of nuclear facility components.

This year marks the NRC's 50th anniversary—a milestone that reflects five decades of unwavering commitment to public health and safety. Our success is rooted in the dedication and expertise of our workforce, whose efforts have made the NRC the global gold standard in nuclear regulation. I am proud to lead this agency at this dynamic time.

ADVANCE ACT

The signing of the Accelerating Deployment of Versatile, Advanced Nuclear for Clean Energy Act (ADVANCE Act) one year ago has positioned the NRC to meet the nation's evolving energy and security needs. While reflecting on the past 50 years has value, our focus remains firmly on the future, and the ADVANCE Act has been instrumental in laying the groundwork for the next 50 years. The Act reinforces our mission focus and empowers us to prioritize safety-significant activities while embracing innovation. We are delivering on this mandate with urgency and purpose.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

The NRC is implementing Executive Order 14300, which calls for a modernized, more agile regulatory framework to support the safe and timely deployment of advanced nuclear technologies. This directive challenges us to think differently, act decisively, and collaborate effectively across government.

While we work in partnership with agencies such as the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Defense (DOD), the NRC remains responsible for commercial civilian licensing and oversight.

We are establishing expedited pathways for reviewing reactor designs that have demonstrated safe performance in federal programs. Additionally, we are updating our processes to provide reviews that are commensurate with the associated level of risk. At the same time, we are reinforcing our commitment to transparency and accountability. This is not just regulatory reform—it is a cultural transformation that positions the NRC to be a forward-leaning, risk- informed regulator for the future.

DRIVING CULTURAL AND OPERATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The NRC is actively reforming its internal culture to become a more efficient and modern agency, while maintaining our focus on safety. Consistent with the agency's new mission statement, we issued a new procedure on interactions with industry to drive quicker regulatory decisions through more effective communications. It establishes clear expectations about how NRC staff should be proactive in clarifying gaps in regulatory requirements, offering insights into potential solutions, and being a helpful and responsive regulator. The NRC is also increasing accountability through a new project management initiative that ties metrics to individual performance.

DELIVERING RESULTS

In 2025, the NRC has:

- Updated milestone schedules in line with the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act (NEIMA).
- Set expedited review timelines for major projects, including:
    - Dow Chemical's Project Long Mott
    - TVA's Clinch River SMR
    - TerraPower's Kemmerer Power Station
    - Framatome fuel facility amendment
- Reduced the hourly rate for advanced reactor applicants by over 50%.
- Submitted reports to Congress on:

- Modernizing environmental reviews
- Integrating advanced manufacturing
- Preparing for non-electric nuclear applications
- Developing a regulatory framework for rapidly deploying fusion machines
- Enhancing oversight programs

In May, we approved the NuScale US460 small modular reactor Standard Design two months early and launched a risk-informed, technology-inclusive microreactor licensing plan. Two months later, we extended reactor design certification terms from 15 to 40 years—reducing regulatory burden while maintaining safety.

We also reached a historic milestone by completing key licensing actions to facilitate the restart of the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant, potentially the first permanently shut-down reactor to resume operations. This sets a precedent for future restarts, including a reactor at the Crane Clean Energy Center and Duane Arnold.

Additionally, we completed the VC Summer Subsequent License Renewal both early and under budget, extending operations through 2062. And we began an unprecedented six-month review for Disa Technologies' multi-site radioactive materials license—aimed at remediating up to 15,000 abandoned uranium mines, many on Tribal lands. This represents a significant advancement for the NRC, made possible by the bipartisan support of Congress.

LOOKING AHEAD

The NRC remains committed to:

- Timely and efficient licensing of new and existing power reactors.
- Enabling innovative small modular and advanced non-light water reactors.
- Advancing fusion regulatory readiness.
- Overseeing the safe use of nuclear materials across sectors.
- Continuing licensing and oversight of decommissioning and fuel cycle facilities.

CONCLUSION

The NRC is delivering results that matter— expedited reviews, streamlined regulations, and a rededicated focus to the safety mission. We are embracing innovation. Our work is not just about regulation—it's about enabling a safer, more secure energy future for all Americans.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission. I look forward to your questions.