

Opening Statement
Chairman Jim Cooper
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
FY20 Priorities for Atomic Energy Defense, Nonproliferation, Safety and
Environmental Management
April 9, 2019

Good afternoon. The Subcommittee will hear testimony on the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request for Atomic Energy Defense, Nonproliferation, Safety and Environmental Management.

Here today to testify are Administrator Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, Assistant Secretary Anne White, and Chairman Bruce Hamilton. We also have backup experts in the audience such as Admiral James Caldwell, Director of Naval Nuclear Reactors, Dr. Charles Verdon, Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, and Brent Park, Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Non-Proliferation, who may be called on to provide the subcommittee with their expertise. We are grateful for the service of all of you, and for your willingness to come before the Subcommittee today.

Our job today is to make sure that our nuclear weapons work, that our deterrent capability is "safe, secure, reliable, and effective," that our plants are run safely, that past mistakes are cleaned up, and that the spread of nuclear weapons and capability in other countries is absolutely minimized. The Administration is asking for about \$23 billion to make sure all that happens. The most expensive decision that the NNSA is about to make is whether to conduct "plutonium sustainment operations" in one or two locations. The life-cycle cost of two sites is roughly \$14 billion extra--almost the entire NNSA budget for a year--double the cost of a one-site solution. Although this decision has not been presented to Congress for a decision, I think that it should be because this is an extraordinary amount of money to spend on a redundant location. We are presented with a \$410 million request to "begin design work to repurpose the cancelled MOX facility into a pit production facility," but that design request turns out to have a \$13.5 billion tail. That \$410 million is in addition to the \$220 million request to close the MOX facility, for a total of \$630 million to be spent on a plant that probably should have been shuttered five years ago. MOX is almost receiving more money today than it was when it was intended to be fully operational. MOX may be worth more dead than alive.

Forgive me for being suspicious when, in addition to this apparent favoritism to Savannah River, only that site is receiving additional funds for cleanup, an additional \$91 million, while Hanford is forced to take substantial cuts. For those of you keeping score at home, this is a total of \$720 million of additional funding for South Carolina, much of which is questionable unless you are sold on the two-site solution for "plutonium sustainment operations."

Chairman Hamilton, your organization plays an important role in ensuring the Department of Energy maintains a safe and environmentally sound nuclear enterprise, both for workers as well as the broader public. I appreciate your testimony on how DOE's recent Order 140.1 defines the word "public" to exclude workers at the plant site and visitors. I look forward to discussing this more. Your testimony on the recent Board recommendations demonstrates that there is ample room for safety improvement throughout the nuclear complex, so it seems to be a bad time to diminish worker protections.

Now, let's hear from the Ranking Member, and then our witnesses.