

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Ranking Member
Committee on Science and Technology
*Charting the Course for American Nuclear Technology: Evaluating the Department of
Energy's Nuclear Energy Research and Development Roadmap*
May 19, 2010

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today on nuclear energy R&D.

After several decades of setbacks and inaction, a growing consensus is finally building in support of expanding the role of nuclear power in our Nation's energy portfolio.

Electricity demand in the U.S. is expected to grow by 30 percent in the next 25 years, and nuclear energy provides a safe, reliable, and cost-competitive source of baseload power to meet this demand.

While much of the "nuclear revival" involves licensing and building more reactors using existing light water reactor technology, there are a host of longer-term activities that must also be pursued. First and foremost among these are (1) dealing with the management of spent nuclear fuel, and (2) supporting R&D to facilitate advances and licensing of new reactor designs and to extend the life of the existing reactor fleet.

With respect to waste management, I have been very clear about my objections to the Administration's attempts to shut down the Yucca Mountain Project, particularly given that the cancellation was done without serious consideration of alternative options. The Federal government is legally obligated to deal with this waste, and the current absence of a path forward threatens to jeopardize growing public support for expanding nuclear power while increasing taxpayer liabilities. This needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

With respect to research and development, there are numerous advanced nuclear designs and technologies that hold promise to address the longer-term cost, safety, and security challenges facing the nuclear industry, and the Administration's R&D Roadmap provides a useful outline of Federal efforts in this area. I support strengthening this R&D effort,

and am particularly interested in advancing the potential of small, modular reactors that are a focus of this hearing.

I look forward to working with the Chairman as we consider crafting nuclear energy R&D legislation later this year, and I thank him for assembling an excellent panel of witnesses today.

I yield back the balance of my time.