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Bipartisan Group of Senators Introduce Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act

*Legislation will promote innovation in the nuclear sector
by enabling processes for licensing new reactors.*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, U.S. Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW), joined with Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Jim Inhofe (R-OK), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Deb Fischer (R-NE), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), and Joe Manchin (D-WV) in introducing S. 512, the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act (NEIMA).

S. 512 will promote innovation in the nuclear sector by enabling processes for licensing new reactors. This legislation will modernize the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) by establishing new transparency and accountability measures to the commission's budget and fee programs. The bill will develop the regulatory framework necessary to enable the licensing of advanced nuclear reactors.

Additionally, the Act will improve the efficiency of uranium regulation. Finally, it will bring transparency and accountability to the process by which the Department of Energy (DOE) disposes of the American public's stockpile of excess uranium.

"American nuclear energy has provided affordable, safe, and reliable power for decades," **said Barrasso**. "Our bipartisan legislation will allow for innovation in the nuclear sector by simplifying regulations at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The commission needs a modern regulatory framework that is predictable and efficient. Advancements in nuclear energy development will create jobs, lower costs, and contribute to America's energy security."

"Next-generation nuclear reactors could help address the serious threats we face from climate change and may ultimately play a key role in reducing nuclear waste. But the federal government's outdated approval process slows these promising new technologies. We need a more efficient regulatory framework that accounts for the big advances we've made in nuclear science," **said Whitehouse**. "This legislation

will give our nuclear regulator the flexibility it needs to bring new, safe reactors online to produce carbon-free energy.”

“I am pleased to join my colleagues in reintroducing this legislation,” **Inhofe said.** “While our traditional power plants have been a reliable source of clean and affordable energy for decades, and will continue to be, it is important that we consider the future of nuclear energy. This bill not only updates the regulatory structure for existing plants but creates a predictable NRC review process for advanced reactors and new technologies. By creating a regulatory framework that is compatible with a variety of technologies we ensure safety without compromising innovation. I look forward to working with Chairman Barrasso on this important piece of legislation”

“We must accelerate our transition to a carbon-free energy future,” **Booker said.** “This bipartisan bill will help provide the modernized regulatory structure needed at the NRC for safe, advanced nuclear reactors to move from concept to reality.”

“Using more clean nuclear energy must be part of any forward-looking domestic energy portfolio,” **Crapo said.** “This bipartisan measure is important to Idaho because it will help ensure that the work being done at Idaho’s National Lab will have a path through the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and on to the commercial market. NEIMA pushes the commission to modernize so that it has the ability to license advanced reactors in a safe, timely, and transparent manner. It will also bring more openness and accountability to the NRC’s budget and fees, which will help stakeholders in-and-out of government better understand what the agency is doing with its resources.”

“The Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act would help keep electricity prices affordable for Nebraska families,” **said Fischer.** “It would also increase transparency at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, streamline the licensing process for advanced nuclear technology, and provide relief for uranium producers by limiting government involvement in the marketplace. With this bipartisan legislation, we can strengthen America’s competitive edge and advance the benefits of nuclear technology.”

“As chairman of the Clean Air and Nuclear Safety subcommittee, I understand the importance of encouraging innovation in our nuclear sector. I’m glad to support this bill that will help establish new processes for reactors, so we can continue growing our economy by making use of multiple energy sources, including nuclear,” **said Capito.**

“I am proud to join my colleagues in introducing this important legislation that will help modernize the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and support the advancement of our nation’s nuclear industry which provides electricity to millions of people and businesses,” **Manchin said.** “This legislation will create greater transparency and accountability within the NRC to improve dynamics and prepare for the future of

nuclear. I have always said we need an all-of-the-above energy policy and the success of nuclear energy is imperative to achieving that goal.”

To view full text of the legislation, click [here](#).

Background Information:

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) [report](#), released earlier today, further highlights the need for the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act.

The report came at the the request of EPW and the House Energy and Commerce Committee. In the report, the GAO examined the NRC’s budget development and fee recovery processes. GAO concluded: “NRC’s fee rule and supporting documents did not clearly present the information that stakeholders need in order to understand fee calculations and provide substantive comments to the agency. Until NRC clearly defines and consistently uses key terms, provides complete calculations and explanations for the fees, and ensure the accuracy of its fee and work papers, industry stakeholders’ understanding of the NRC’s fee calculations may remain limited. ... Without setting performance goals and measure, NRC cannot effectively assess the extent to which its actions are improving transparency and timeliness.”

On Feb. 8, 2017, Chairman Barrasso along with House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR), sent a [letter](#) to the GAO requesting they further examine the NRC’s billing and fee collection methods: In the letter the chairmen wrote: “Licensees have raised concerns that NRC’s invoices lack transparency, meaning they do not contain sufficient detail to substantiate charges. ... Some licensees have voiced concerns that NRC’s activity codes are confusing to understand and do not allow a licensee to track invoiced amounts to specific activities. Due to this confusion, some licensees have reported that they are being charged multiple times for the same activity and are questioning the reliability of NRC’s billing process.”

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