

## **ECA Update February 25, 2016**

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**March 2016**

**01**

House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development Appropriations Hearing  
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Press Release: House Energy and Commerce Committee

**Department of Energy: Observations on Efforts by NNSA and the Office of Environmental Management to Manage and Oversee the Nuclear Security Enterprise.**

*ECA Staff*

A recent report released by the Government Accountability Office revealed that The Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) continues to face several ongoing challenges in modernizing the nuclear security enterprise, including managing life extension programs (LEP), contracts and major projects, and the alignment of plans with future budgets.

Please find of the report and highlights here:

Testimony: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-422T>

Highlights: <http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/675364.pdf>

**Got a quarter of a trillion dollars? Or a half?**

***Naval Reactors"***  
(1:30 PM)

[Visit website.](#)

**March 2016**

**02**

House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development Appropriations Hearing  
***"Budget Hearing - Department of Energy, Applied Energy"***  
(10:30 AM)

[Visit website.](#)

**March 2016**

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Senate Energy and Natural Resources Hearing  
***"Hearing to examine the Department of Energy's budget request for Fiscal Year 2017"***  
(10:00 AM)

[Visit website.](#)

**August 2016**

NMPolitics.Net

February 24, 2016

[LINK](#)

The environmental damage caused by decades of nuclear weapons production will take at least 60 more years to clean up and cost taxpayers nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars, according to the Energy Department's latest estimate, disclosed at a Senate Armed Services subcommittee hearing on Feb. 23.

The \$240 billion tally was included in prepared testimony by an official of the Government Accountability Office, who estimated that an additional \$280 billion dollars will be needed to finance the U.S. government's planned modernization of its nuclear warheads over the next 25 years.

David Trimble, who directs the GAO's Natural Resources and Environment Division, remarked that the government faces challenges in its contracting procedures for this work, and in aligning "its plans with future budgets."

He said the Energy Department's estimate of cleanup costs — as large as it is — was billions of dollars short of what the government will actually have to spend, because expenses associated with fixing some additional damaged sites were not included.

Trimble also noted that the government's estimate of the final tally has been growing as the work proceeds. Over the last four years, for example, it grew by \$77 billion. The Energy Department could do a better job of prioritizing cleanup work and tackling it more systematically, he said.

This year, the budget for the Environmental Management component of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is \$6.2 billion. President Barack Obama's budget request for fiscal year 2017 seeks \$6.1 billion — a 1.6 percent reduction from the current level.

# 9-10

Third Annual  
Intermountain  
Energy Summit  
Idaho Falls, ID  
[Visit website.](#)

September 2016

# 14-15

DOE National Cleanup  
Workshop  
Hilton Alexandria Mark  
Center  
Alexandria, VA  
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Environmental Management oversees projects that include the stabilization and disposal of liquid waste held in tank farms at the Hanford Nuclear Site, uranium disposal at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, general cleanup of the highly plutonium contaminated grounds of Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and many more tasks.

While cleanup would get cut back, Obama has proposed to increase spending on weapons modernization in the NNSA budget, from \$8.8 billion to \$9.2 billion, a 4.5 percent increase.

Monica Regalbuto, the Energy Department's assistant secretary for Environmental Management, said her division has set clear priorities, beginning with reopening the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico. The deep geological repository for nuclear waste produced by the weapons program has been shut down since February 2014, when a series of accidents led to its contamination and a radiation leak escaped into the environment.

The plant plays a key role in the national nuclear cleanup campaigns, and while it's been shut, waste is piling up at sites around the country that are ill-equipped for long-term storage of such hazardous materials. Regalbuto said the repository is on track to begin accepting waste again in **December 2016**.

Subcommittee chairman Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Alabama, criticized the NNSA for exceeding its budgets for such work and missing deadlines. "We're giving people pink slips that want to stay in the military," he said, because the nuclear work requires more funding than anticipated.

### **Alexander Says Ending Nuclear Waste Stalemate Is Critical To Future Of Nuclear Power**

The Chatanoogan  
February 24, 2016

[LINK](#)

Senator Lamar Alexander on Wednesday said in a hearing on the president's proposed budget for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission it is critical that the U.S. ends the 25-year-old nuclear waste stalemate.

Senator Alexander, who leads the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development that oversees funding for the NRC, focused on the need to ensure regulators are prepared to: review licenses for new nuclear waste storage sites, safely extend existing reactor licenses, review licenses for new reactors, such as small modular reactors, and reduce the NRC budget to reflect its actual workload.

“At a time when everyone wants to produce more carbon-free electricity it makes no sense whatsoever to undermine this source of power by continuing this logjam and not opening Yucca Mountain to dispose of used nuclear fuel. Federal law designates Yucca Mountain as the nation’s repository for used nuclear fuel, and the Commission’s own scientists have told us that we can safely store used nuclear fuel there for up to 1 million years. There’s no excuse for Congress to continue to keep Yucca Mountain closed,” Senator Alexander said.

He also said he intends to include in this year’s appropriations bill a pilot program that would allow the creation of consolidated storage sites for used nuclear fuel, and a change in the law that would allow the Department of Energy to contract with private storage facilities to store used nuclear fuel. The goal is to make sure that used fuel that is currently stored at more than 75 sites around the country could be moved to consolidated storage sites before being placed in a permanent repository.

“These new storage facilities would not take the place of Yucca Mountain — we have more than enough waste to fill Yucca Mountain to its legal capacity — but rather would complement it. To end this stalemate we need to move on all tracks,” he said.

Senator Alexander also voiced concern at the hearing about why President Obama's budget request for the NRC did not include money for Yucca Mountain. Utilities paid money collected from customers from 1983 to 2013 into the Nuclear Waste Fund to pay for disposal of used nuclear fuel. The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals said the government couldn't collect more fees until it complied with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act.

Senator Alexander's full opening remarks as prepared follow. [Click here to view a video of his statements.](#)

We're here today to review the president's fiscal year 2017 budget request for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the independent federal agency responsible for regulating the safety of our nation's commercial nuclear power plants and other nuclear materials.

The budget request for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is \$970.2 million dollars. This is a decrease of \$19.8 million dollars from fiscal year 2016. This decrease from last year's appropriations bill is a positive step toward making the Commission's budget reflect its actual workload.

I also appreciate the Commission's efforts to identify more ways to reduce spending and reduce the NRC's funding needs for the coming year. We want to work closely with the Commission to make sure the Energy and Water Appropriations bill we are drafting reflects those savings, making the best use of taxpayer dollars.

However, we also want to make sure we continue to invest in nuclear power, which provides more than 60 percent of our country's carbon-free electricity. Safely extending licenses for our existing reactors, licensing new reactors, including small modular reactors, and solving the nuclear waste stalemate are all important to the future of nuclear energy.

Today, I will focus my questions on four main areas:

- 1.Licensing facilities for used nuclear fuel and solving the nuclear waste stalemate;
- 2.Safely extending licenses for existing reactors;
- 3.Licensing new reactors; and
- 4.Making sure the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is operating efficiently.

### Licensing Facilities for Used Nuclear Fuel

To ensure that nuclear power has a strong future in this country, we must solve the 25-year-old stalemate about what to do with used fuel from our nuclear reactors.

Last year, Sens. Feinstein, Murkowski, Cantwell, and I reintroduced bipartisan legislation, to create temporary and permanent facilities to store and dispose of our used nuclear fuel, consistent with the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future.

Sen. Feinstein and I, with the support of the leaders of the authorizing committee, plan to include in the Energy and Water bill we're drafting this year, a pilot program for nuclear waste storage and language that allows the Secretary of Energy to contract with private storage facilities, as we have in the past. These new storage facilities and repositories would not take the place of Yucca Mountain — we have more than enough waste to fill Yucca Mountain to its legal capacity — but rather would complement it.

I strongly believe that Yucca Mountain can and should be part of the solution. Federal law designates Yucca Mountain as the nation's repository for used nuclear fuel, and the Commission's own scientists have told us that we can safely store nuclear waste there for up to 1 million years.

But regardless of where we build permanent repositories, we still need facilities where we can consolidate all of the used fuel that is currently located at more than 75 sites around the country. The Blue Ribbon Commission concluded that "it would be prudent to pursue the development

of consolidated storage capability without further delay", and Sen. Feinstein and I agree with that recommendation.

Over the last four years, we have heard from communities and states who are interested in hosting a consolidated storage site. I support moving forward with consolidated storage on as many tracks as we can, whether it's at a private facility or one built under our pilot program, and it is important to make sure that the Commission is ready to act expeditiously.

I understand that at least one private company is planning to submit an application to the Commission later this year for a license to build and operate a consolidated storage facility, and there may be others.

I want to make sure that the Commission has all the resources it needs in fiscal year 2017 to complete a review of these applications.

I also want to be clear that the Commission should continue licensing activities for Yucca Mountain.

The Nuclear Waste Fund, which is money that utilities have collected from customers on their monthly bills from 1983 until 2013 and paid to the government to dispose of their used nuclear fuel plus accrued interest, will have a balance of about \$37.5 billion at the end of the year, and there are still several steps to go in the licensing process for Yucca Mountain.

The government has been prevented from collecting fees since 2013, when the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit Court said the federal government should comply with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act as it is currently written – i.e. open Yucca Mountain – or until Congress enacts an alternative nuclear waste management plan.

Yet for the sixth year, the Commission has not requested any funding to continue licensing activities for Yucca Mountain, even though the

Commission will run out of money later this year for that purpose and there are still several more steps that need to be taken.

#### Safely Extending Licenses for Existing Reactors

Instead of building more windmills, which only produce 14 percent of our carbon-free electricity, or solar farms, which only produce 1 percent of our carbon-free electricity, the best way to make sure the United States has a reliable source of cheap, efficient, carbon-free electricity is to extend the licenses of the nuclear reactors that are already operating.

Most of our 100 reactors have already extended their operating licenses from 40 to 60 years, and some utilities are planning to begin the process to extend these licenses from 60 to 80 years.

The Commission told the Subcommittee in last year's hearing that it had already developed the framework to safely extend licenses beyond 60 years, and I want to make sure that the Commission has the resources it needs to take any additional steps it needs prior to receiving those applications.

#### Licensing New Reactors

In addition to the reactors we already have, the Commission also needs to be ready to review applications for new reactors, including small modular reactors.

I understand that NuScale may file an application for design certification of a small modular reactor with the Commission later this year. Last week, NuScale received a permit from the Department of Energy, which will allow the company to build a small modular reactor module within 10 years on the property of Idaho National Laboratory and to use the site for 99 years for its operation.

This new reactor design has been supported by the Department of Energy's small modular reactor program, which this subcommittee has funded since 2012. The subcommittee has also provided the NRC with funding to prepare to receive applications for small modular reactors. I want to make sure the Commission is ready to review this new technology once it receives an application.

I also understand that the Commission has requested \$5 million to look at advanced reactor designs, and I'd like to understand more about the Commission's plans for these funds.

#### Making Sure the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is Running Efficiently

One of the challenges for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is to make sure the agency is running effectively and focusing on the right goals.

In the early 2000s, the Commission began planning to receive a large number of applications for new reactor licenses, and Congress increased the Commission's funding from \$470 million in FY2000 to a high of \$1.043 billion in FY2014. But most of these expected licenses were never actually submitted, which has left the Commission's workforce and budget out of balance with its actual workload.

In June 2014, the Commission began an effort, known as Project Aim, to address this imbalance by looking at the work that would be needed over the next several years and then aligning its workforce and budget with that forecast. As a result of the first step of this effort, the Commission's budget has decreased. In fact, this year's budget request is about \$74 million dollars less than what the Commission received in 2014.

Last year, we worked with the Commission to cut its budget request by about \$30 million dollars, and I'm pleased this year's budget request continues in the right direction. I understand that the Commission's staff has identified an additional \$32 million in savings that could be applied to this year's budget

request. I want to make sure the bill Sen. Feinstein and I are drafting this year reflects those additional savings so taxpayer money is used effectively.

I look forward to working with the Commission as we begin putting together our Energy and Water Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2017, and also with my Ranking Member, Senator Feinstein, who I will now recognize for an opening statement.

### **Savannah River Site resumes H Canyon process**

Aiken Standard

February 23, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Savannah River Site's H Canyon has resumed the final step in spent fuel processing.

According to a news release from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, the primary contractor of H Canyon, the second uranium cycle is operational after a three-year hiatus. The second cycle is the third and final step in the spent fuel processing campaign performed at H Canyon before low-enriched uranium is sent to the Tennessee Valley Authority.

H Canyon is the only hardened nuclear plant that performs chemical separations in the United States and has been in existence since the 1950s, when it was constructed to produce nuclear materials for use by the military. Currently, H Canyon is used to stabilize the nuclear materials for the Department of Energy.

"We are really excited to be back in operation," said Stephanie Hudlow, SRNS H Canyon Facility Manager. "The operations team did an excellent job with procedure execution and recognizing the need for slow and deliberate operations since it has been so long since this equipment has run."

The spent-fuel campaign creates low-enriched uranium, or LEU, by blending highly-enriched uranium with natural uranium. The blended uranium can be turned into fuel for commercial nuclear power reactors, like the Tennessee Valley Authority.

From 2003 to 2011, H Canyon produced around 300 metric tons of low-enriched uranium for the Tennessee Valley Authority, which would be enough to power all South Carolina residences for 8.5 years or every house in the country for 47 days.

“It’s important to note that this process recycles spent fuel for another beneficial use, rather than disposing of it,” said Patrick McGuire, DOE assistant manager for Nuclear Material Stabilization.

According to a news release, in today’s process, H Canyon is working with Material Test Reactor fuel rods, which are spent nuclear fuel rods from domestic and foreign reactors. The highly-enriched uranium is run through three process operations in H Canyon, with each stage further purifying the uranium to meet Tennessee Valley Authority specifications. The last cycle, which has just begun, involves two evaporators and two mixer-settler banks to separate impurities from the uranium solution.

“This campaign is important because it removes spent nuclear fuel from the state of South Carolina,” said Mike Swain, SRNS Director, EM Programs. “It also supports nuclear non-proliferation and provides a service to the TVA and a return to the taxpayer.”

### **Fluor prepares to take over**

Post-Register

February 24, 2016

[LINK](#)

The next cleanup contractor team to take charge at the U.S. Department of Energy's desert site will include a pair of Idaho Falls companies: North Wind and Portage.

Both will serve as subcontractors on the cleanup team led by Fluor, a Fortune 500 company based in Texas. Other companies set to work under Fluor on the project include Colorado-based CH2M and Texas-based Waste Control Specialists.

DOE awarded the \$1.4 billion, five-year contract to Fluor earlier this month, though many details weren't immediately disclosed — including which companies made up the winning team. Fluor beat out just one other contractor, California-based AECOM, for the lucrative but risky assignment that includes radioactive waste cleanup and oversight duties west of Idaho Falls.

The new Fluor mega-contract, known as Idaho Cleanup Project Core, or ICP Core, will combine the responsibilities of the two current cleanup contractors, CH2M-WG Idaho, or CWI, and Idaho Treatment Group. The work will include everything from cleaning up buried radioactive waste, to watching over spent nuclear fuel and liquid waste reprocessing.

The two existing contractors employ a combined 1,700. Under the terms of the new contract, Fluor must offer positions to qualified existing contractor employees who aren't in management or supervisor roles.

"While this consolidation presents significant challenges, we have a strong team — one that not only respects the outstanding work already done at the site, but also has the expertise and resources to achieve mission success on this contract," Bruce Stanski, Fluor Government Group president, said in a statement.

Three-month transition period

AECOM has until the end of this month to protest the contract award decision. AECOM spokesman Keith Wood wouldn't comment on that possibility, and DOE officials also said they aren't allowed to comment on the new contract until the protest period is over.

But assuming there are no complications, Fluor begins a three-month transition period next week. Fluor spokeswoman Annika Toenniessen said that's when the company would be able to release more details on its leadership team and other staffing plans.

The transition period means CWI and Idaho Treatment Group have also had their contracts extended through the end of May, the second time in recent months they have received extensions.

CWI and ITG were extended by six months at the end of September when the procurement process for the new contract took longer than anticipated. That initial six-month extension netted the two contractors a combined \$180 million. Value of the upcoming two-month extension has not been announced.

"What happens on these teams is you change out the leadership level, and for the most part, a lot stays the same down below," said Richard Holman, president of the board of directors for the Idaho Falls-based Partnership for Science and Technology. "You're not going to let everybody go and hire a new group of people."

Still, Holman said, switching out the "upper echelon" of leadership "can do a lot to change the culture of an organization."

#### Fluor grows Idaho presence

Fluor has worked on everything from highway and bridge projects to solar projects. It's served as a DOE contractor in varying capacities for more than 70 years, dating back to the Manhattan Project.

The Irving, Texas-based company ranks No. 136 on the Fortune 500 list, and reported \$21.5 billion in revenues for 2014. Just this month, along with the Idaho award, the company received contracts to build or engineer natural gas facilities in British Columbia and Pennsylvania as well as two Texas chemical plants.

Fluor was involved in Idaho site projects several decades ago, including the Material Test Reactor, Advanced Test Reactor and the New Waste Calcine Facility, according to Stanski. But it hadn't had much of a local presence in recent years until mounting its effort for the ICP Core contract and opening an Idaho Falls office in 2014.

That eastern Idaho presence is growing quickly, as Fluor also has a majority stake in NuScale Power, the small modular nuclear reactor company that plans to build its first plant somewhere on the desert site.

Leslie Jones, former executive director of the Partnership for Science and Technology, has followed the new contract process closely. She said one of Fluor's strengths is its communication style.

"I see Fluor's relationship only improving with the state of Idaho, DOE and with the lab," she said. "I see Fluor as being a very proactive communicator, where there have been some lapses in the past."

Subcontractors have local knowledge

Both North Wind and Portage have been involved in the Idaho cleanup mission for several years, and hold similar DOE contracts across the country, including at Oak Ridge, Tenn., and Carlsbad, N.M.

Holman said the fact that Fluor brought two local companies on board for the contract "says a lot about their commitment to the community," and supporting local economic development.

CH2M is a parent company — along with AECOM — of current cleanup contractor CWI, so it also brings institutional knowledge of the Idaho site.

Waste Control Specialists, meanwhile, has not had a significant presence in Idaho before. Its main project has been a 1,300-acre low-level nuclear waste disposal site it operates in remote west Texas. The facility is one of just four sites that accept such radioactive waste in the U.S., and has taken waste from the Idaho cleanup effort before.

Fluor team will face big challenges

The Fluor team will inherit several challenges in its new Idaho role.

One will be meeting fast approaching state cleanup deadlines in the 1995 Settlement Agreement, including one at the end of 2018 to have transuranic waste shipped out of the state.

Another test will be the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit, the facility built more than five years ago to treat 900,000 gallons of sodium-bearing liquid radioactive waste.

Several state deadlines have already been missed on that project as it struggles to start up, and costs for both CWI and DOE have soared. CWI also was penalized by about \$9 million in withheld bonus fee payments from 2012 to 2015 related to the plant, according to DOE documents.

Under the new contract, however, it appears the Fluor team will have several protections in place, in case the treatment unit continues to struggle to get going.

For example, if cost overruns continue, Fluor's larger contract "ceiling" won't be impacted, according to the new contract language.

Also, the bonus fee Fluor can earn for work on treatment unit is set at a fixed amount, instead of being performance-based.

### **UT study touts economic impacts of DOE cleanup**

Knox News

February 24, 2016

[LINK](#)

OAK RIDGE — A new economic impact study says the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge cleanup program was responsible for about 6,200 jobs — direct and indirect — in Fiscal Year 2014.

The study, which was conducted by the University of Tennessee's Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy, also said the cleanup-related activities in Oak Ridge added \$545 million to the state's gross domestic product — value of what the state's economy produces in a single year.

Most of the economic impacts were felt in Anderson and Roane Counties, where the DOE facilities are located, and Knox County, where the greatest number of Oak Ridge workers live.

Release of the study comes at a time when DOE is trying to gain approval of environmental regulators and local communities to construct a new landfill for hazardous and radioactive wastes on the government's Oak Ridge reservation.

The study touts the expected financial impacts of the proposed landfill.

"Spending by OREM (DOE's Oak Ridge Office of Environmental Management) and its contractors would add approximately \$1.3 billion to Tennessee's state GDP over the life of the project," the report stated. About \$1 billion of the projected benefits would accrue in Anderson, Roane and Knox Counties, according to the report.

The city of Oak Ridge has already hired a consultant to evaluate the landfill project and to identify concerns — such as a tarnished image as a waste dump and the relative proximity of the proposed landfill site to Oak Ridge residents. The city has expressed its concerns to the Department of Energy.

The economic impact study was discussed a recent meeting of the East Tennessee Economic Council.

"We're still wanting to analyze it a little further," Oak Ridge City Manager Mark Watson said.

Watson emphasized that it's difficult to assess the specific impacts on the city because the data is compiled by county, with much of it rolled into one three-county region (Anderson, Roane and Knox).

Oak Ridge may face issues that are different from those in Knoxville, such as tax assessments, he said.

"There's a lot of movement in the Department of Energy at the present time, and so we're really just trying to get down and understand (the possible impacts)," Watson said.

Matt Murray, director of UT's Baker Center, said the study provides "an important piece of information" for stakeholders to have when evaluating projects such as the new landfill for wastes generated by cleanup projects.

The study was conducted by UT under a \$20,000 contract with URS-CH2M Oak Ridge, DOE's cleanup manager in Oak Ridge.

### **Graham questions feasibility of MOX alternative**

Aiken Standard

February 24, 2016

[LINK](#)

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham didn't mince words earlier this week while criticizing President Barack Obama's plan to pull the plug on the Savannah River Site's unfinished Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility and move forward with another disposal method for excess weapons-grade plutonium.

In Graham's opinion, the alternative might not be feasible. "Nobody has any idea if it will work; I think it's a lousy plan," said Graham on Tuesday during a Senate Committee on Armed Services subcommittee meeting in Washington, D.C.

Under Obama's proposed budget for fiscal year 2017, MOX would be abandoned. Only \$270 million would be allocated to start winding down the project, which so far has cost billions of dollars to build.

Instead of MOX, Obama's plan suggests a downblending method would be used to dilute the plutonium and dispose of it at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, or WIPP, in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

Obama believes switching to the downblending option would be cheaper and faster than completing the construction of the MOX facility and continuing to operate it.

The United States Department of Energy and National Nuclear Security Administration, a semi-autonomous group within the Energy Department, support Obama's proposal.

During the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces meeting, Graham expressed several concerns about the downblending plan, saying important questions still needed to be answered. One, he said, was would New Mexico be willing to accept the plutonium that would be downblended?

Graham, who is a member of the subcommittee, also mentioned the agreement with Russia involving the disposal of excess weapons-grade

plutonium and asked if Russia's approval would be required for the U.S. to change the method it uses.

In New Mexico, "local communities are quite willing" to accept plutonium, said Ret. Air Force Lt. Gen. Frank Klotz, who is the undersecretary for nuclear security and administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration.

Graham disagreed, saying New Mexico residents "are, at least, divided."

Graham asked Klotz if he had spoken with New Mexico's senators, Tom Udall and Martin Heinrich. Klotz replied that he had not.

"Well, how in the world can you say that New Mexico is OK with this when you haven't talked to the two senators?" Graham said. "I've talked to both of them, and they are not OK with it."

As for Graham's concern about Russian approval, Klotz agreed with Graham that it would be necessary, calling his interpretation of the agreement "a fair reading" of the situation.

"I have very little confidence that the Russians are going to agree without a heavy price to be paid," Graham said. "This is not the time to go to the Russians and ask for a favor."

In raising another concern, Graham said supporters of downblending needed to explore further any legal issues that might need to be addressed.

Klotz, however, remained firm in his support for downblending, describing it as "an excellent plan."

In addition, Graham questioned why the government waited so long to determine that MOX wouldn't work, saying the decision came after "70 percent" of the facility had been finished.

“Now, we are going to change horses and come up with another plan,” Graham said. “Somebody needs to be fired. This is an example of a government just completely out of touch with reality.”

After listening to both Graham and Klotz, Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, who is the subcommittee’s chairman, said: “We’ve got to get a grasp on this. Sen. Graham is correctly challenging this and asking for some legitimate information. I know that we will want to look at it, and we may have to make a tough decision and say, ‘Senator Graham, sorry,’ but you’re entitled to have a clear answer.”

### **Recovery Work Halts At New Mexico Nuclear Waste Facility**

AP:KJJZ

February 24, 2016

[LINK](#)

Poor air quality has temporarily halted recovery work at an underground nuclear waste storage facility in New Mexico, which has been closed for the past two years following an accident.

Federal officials announced what they called a “safety pause” late Monday at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, outside of Carlsbad. This came after monitoring instruments carried by workers detected elevated levels of carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds.

Work won't resume until a plan is developed to keep workers safe, but officials are still hoping to reopen the facility by the end of the year. The repository has been closed since February 2014. That's when an incorrectly packed drum of waste from Los Alamos National Laboratory popped its lid and released radiation.

### **HEARING: Moniz to Testify Before #SubEnergyPower on DOE Budget Next Week**

Press Release: House Energy and Commerce Committee

February 24, 2016

[LINK](#)

The Subcommittee on Energy and Power, chaired by Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-KY), has scheduled a hearing for Wednesday, March 2, 2016, at 10 a.m. in room 2123 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is entitled, "The Fiscal Year 2017 DOE Budget."

Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz will be the sole witness and provide testimony on the proposed budget.

"Our energy landscape has dramatically changed, and we are a nation blessed with many resources. The committee looks forward to a thoughtful conversation and examination of the policies DOE's pursuing in the coming year. Naturally, there will be things we disagree on but we will take a serious look at the things we can find common ground on to modernize our energy infrastructure and energy policies for the 21st century," said Chairman Whitfield.

The Majority Memorandum and witness testimony will be available [here](#) as they are posted.

###