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SENIOR FELLOW

SENATOR JOHN HEINZ PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT

PRACTICE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT, RETIRED

December 5, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
Chairman  
House Science Subcommittee on Science,  
Space and Technology  
2321 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Ranking Member  
House Science Subcommittee on Science,  
Space and Technology  
394 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Randy Weber  
Chairman  
House Science Subcommittee on Energy  
2319 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Johnson and Chairman Weber:

Your leadership on the issue of advanced nuclear energy innovation is badly needed. Though I speak solely for myself, not my institution, it is clear that the world needs better alternatives, much sooner for dealing with the interwoven challenges of energy poverty, energy security and energy emissions. While advanced nuclear energy is not the only potential technology that can attack these problems, it is certainly one of the more promising and needs to be an option that is fully understood and prudentially available as our nation make its energy choices.

Today, the United States is in danger of forfeiting its leadership in the field of nuclear energy. The barriers to rapid progress in advanced nuclear energy are certainly not technical and probably not even economic. The greatest barriers today are in outdated nuclear regulations in the United States that hamper rapid iteration and experimentation in the product development process. This, in turn, stifles innovation, scares off private investors and creates an industry-regulatory culture that has grown to accept development timelines measured in decades as the best than can be done.

Sadly, today some of America's most promising ventures are heading overseas to find the environment they must have to develop their products in a timely fashion, [TerraPower](#) to China and [ThorCon Power](#) to Indonesia. As an American citizen and a business school professor, I find it sad when US-based ventures decide it is necessary to sidestep (or non-US ventures decide not to come to) the United States due to what I perceive as failures of national policy and common sense. I hate to see business and employment opportunities that are on the scale of a Boeing or an Airbus put at risk of slipping from American fingers for lack of protection from US law and lack of negotiating power with foreign nations when they, in effect, are forced to head overseas.

As your legislation outlines, there is much to be gained by coordinating the efforts of the US government with that of private companies. Private companies need the regulatory clarity that your legislation provides to raise the private money needed to finance the demonstration and commercialization of innovative new reactor designs in the US. US government laboratories need the long-term budget clarity that your legislation provides to design the basic research programs that are needed for on-going nuclear innovation by all private companies. US regulators and policy makers need the clear view that your legislation provides of what is expected and authorized by our elected officials.

I want to thank you for your leadership and your attention to the issues surrounding advanced nuclear energy. Advanced nuclear energy is vital to our nation's interests. Innovation in this area can only occur when legislation, such as you are offering, lets the private sector and the government advance hand-in-hand.

Respectfully,

*JBLASSITER III*