

Opening Statement for Rep. Vernon J. Ehlers (R-MI)
Committee on Science and Technology
Hearing on
“Advancing Technology for Nuclear Fuel Recycling: What Should Our
Research, Development and Demonstration Strategy Be?”
June 17, 2009

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today on nuclear fuel recycling. I think this is a very important issue for this committee to be looking into as nuclear energy is a clean and reliable source of baseload power in the United States.

We all know the basic facts. There are currently 104 nuclear power plants in 31 states operating in our country generating approximately 20 percent of the electricity produced. Nuclear plants in 2008 ran at a capacity factor of 91.5 percent compared to 73.6 percent for coal, 42 percent for natural gas and 40 percent for renewables. My home state of Michigan has 4 nuclear plants that generate 26.2 percent of the state’s electricity.

As the industry is facing resurgence in the interest to build new nuclear plants, the issue of nuclear waste is prevalent -- even more so with the decision by the Obama Administration to abandon a permanent repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada after over 20 years of research and billions of

dollars of carefully planned and reviewed scientific field work. So we're here today to receive testimony from our four expert witnesses on the facts and on the pros and cons of reprocessing and recycling used nuclear fuel. I believe that finding some sort of a solution to how to handle our used nuclear fuel is critical to the continued successful contribution of nuclear energy to our country's electric generation and I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses on this important and timely topic.