

**Chairman Lamar Alexander Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development**

**Markup of the FY2018 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill**

**July 18, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Senator Feinstein and I have worked together under very challenging fiscal constraints this year the same way we always have – in a fair and accommodating manner – with the goal of drafting a bipartisan bill for the subcommittee’s consideration that prioritizes spending and reduces waste.

I would also like to thank the staff who have been working together to put this bill together over the past two weeks.

Doug Clapp, Chris Hanson and Samantha Nelson with Senator Feinstein.

Tyler Owens, Adam DeMella, Meyer Seligman, Jen Armstrong, Molly Marsh, and Rachel Littleton of my staff.

We expect the bill will be approved by the full Appropriations Committee Thursday, which means it could be one of the first appropriations bills considered by the full Senate this year.

To develop the legislation, we held 4 budget hearings in June and received funding recommendations from 82 Senators.

The fiscal year 2018 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill before us today provides a total of \$38.4 billion, which is \$629 million more than last year, and \$4.1 billion more than the budget request.

The funding included in this bill supports several federal agencies that do important work, including:

- the U.S. Department of Energy
- the Army Corps of Engineers
- the Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- the National Nuclear Security Administration,
- the Appalachian Regional Commission, and;
- the Bureau of Reclamation

Reaching an agreement was not easy. For fiscal year 2018, under the Budget Control Act spending caps, Congress has less money to appropriate than last year. Congress may agree to increase the spending caps, and if it does, we will do as we did in 2016 – we will add the increased amounts to those items the subcommittee feels are the most important priorities.

This subcommittee received an allocation for defense spending that is nearly \$1.044 billion above last year, and an allocation for non-defense spending that is \$414 million below last year.

We also started with an unrealistic budget proposal from the president.

The Department of Energy's budget request for fiscal year 2018 was only \$28 billion dollars, a decrease of about \$2.9 billion – or 10 percent below – what Congress provided last year.

The president's budget request recommended reducing funding for the Office of Science by a little over \$919 million, proposed to significantly decrease federally funded research and development programs, and terminate ARPA-E.

The budget request also failed to prioritize federal spending on water infrastructure. Based on the number of appropriations requests we receive each year, the Corps of Engineers is the federal government's most popular agency.

Instead of building on what Congress provided last year, the president's budget request proposed only \$5.002 billion for the Corps, which is a more than \$1 billion cut, or 17% less, than what was provided last year.

Despite this – the bill Senator Feinstein and I have negotiated funds many of the priorities that we can all agree on.

The bill:

Sets new record levels of funding in a regular appropriations bill for the Office of Science of \$5.55 billion and the Corps of Engineers at \$6.172 billion

- Funds ARPA-E at a record level of \$330 million
- Provides the amount authorized by Congress to dredge and maintain our harbors for the fourth consecutive year and makes full use of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund – in other words we use all of the money we collect in taxes each year from the ships that use of the waterways to improve the waterways.
- Takes steps to help resolve the nuclear waste stalemate
- Funds cleanup of hazardous materials at Cold War sites, and;
- Modernizes our nuclear weapons stockpile

However, since governing is about setting priorities, we had to make hard decisions to reduce or eliminate programs to make sure that the highest priorities in the bill received adequate funding.

We eliminated funding for the U.S. contribution to ITER, the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor in France. This saved \$50 million.

We also agreed with the Administration's recommendation to eliminate the Title 17 Loan Guarantee program. We used the savings from eliminating this lower priority program to fund higher priority science and energy research and development work in the bill.

We also continued our intensive oversight to make sure that the programs that received funding were using these taxpayer dollars efficiently and effectively.

We continue to work together to keep big projects like the Uranium Processing Facility on time and on budget, and make sure that we are effectively using limited taxpayer dollars.

We also continue to be very concerned about the cost of the MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility in South Carolina, and we agree with the recommendation in the budget request to terminate the program. We are working with Senator Graham and the Senate Armed Services Committee to find a path forward to move plutonium out of South Carolina sooner and at a lower cost to taxpayers.

In my opinion, we should spend more, not less, on our nation's water infrastructure – and this bill reflects that priority.

This bill restores the proposed cuts to the Corps of Engineers budget, and meets the funding targets set by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act for the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for the fourth year in a row. This means Mobile Harbor in Alabama, Savannah Harbor in Georgia, Long Beach Harbor in California and many others across the country will be adequately funded.

Of particular importance to Tennessee, we rejected the president's budget request to only spend \$26 million from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund this fiscal year, which would have left about 84 percent of the funds that are collected from the taxpayers who use the waterways each year for the purpose of improving locks and dams and putting that money in a bank account and leaving it unspent.

This bill being considered today ensures that there will be enough funding for the Corps to continue building a new Chickamauga Lock in fiscal year 2018, for the fourth consecutive year, which continues to be the fourth highest priority of essential American waterways to be rebuilt.

The funding level in this bill also funds the three higher priority locks - Olmsted Lock, the Lower Monongahela Lock, and Kentucky Lock - to ensure that construction on these projects can continue.

The United States continues to produce more than 20 percent of the wealth each year for just about 4 percent of the people in the world.

The Department of Energy's research programs and 17 national laboratories have made the United States a world leader in science and technology, which is why we must continue to prioritize spending on these efforts so the United States remains competitive at a time when other countries are investing heavily in research.

Like last year, the bill Senator Feinstein and I have agreed on, provides new record funding levels in a regular appropriations bill for Department of Energy research programs including \$5.55 billion for the Office of Science and \$330 million for ARPA-E.

We need to remember that research funding for Department of Energy laboratories has produced technologies for unconventional natural gas development, supercomputing, 3D printing, nuclear imaging devices used for medical diagnosis, MRI scanners, optical digital recording technology used to make DVDs, batteries and energy storage systems for cars and trucks and the electric grid, and precision detectors and pharmaceuticals.

I'm also pleased to also be able to say that this bill makes it clear supercomputing is a national priority – which is something Secretary Perry and I both feel strongly about.

The bill provides \$381 million within the Office of Science and the National Nuclear Security Administration to deliver at least one Exascale machine in 2021 to reassert U.S. leadership in this critical area.

Nuclear power provides about 20 percent of our country's electricity, and 60 percent of its carbon-free electricity.

If we're going to have the abundance of clean, cheap, reliable energy we need to power our 21st-century economy, we need to unleash nuclear power by removing the obstacles standing in its way.

Our legislation sends a strong signal for developing new technologies that will support the next generation of nuclear power plants, while also doing the research to support extending the lives of existing reactors when it is safe to do so.

We included \$92 million for Advanced Reactors, which is \$28 million more than the president's budget request. We also provided \$40 million for research to support existing light water reactors, which is a \$20 million more than the president's request.

We also funded the Center for Advanced Simulation of Light Water Reactors, also called CASL, at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. CASL is important for supporting our existing fleet of reactors as well as advanced reactors we may build in the future.

The bill also takes important steps toward solving our country's stalemate over what to do with nuclear waste, and this is another bipartisan issue that Senator Feinstein and I agree on.

Our legislation includes a pilot program for consolidated nuclear waste storage, which Senator Feinstein and I have included in the Energy and Water Appropriations bill for the past four years.

The bill also provides funding for the U.S. Department of Energy to support storing nuclear waste at private facilities.

The new sites we are seeking to establish would not take the place of Yucca Mountain — we have more than enough used fuel to fill Yucca Mountain to its legal capacity — but rather would complement it.

We're also supporting research in this bill that will help continue the work that is necessary to safely extend nuclear power operating licenses from 60 to 80 years.

This legislation provides a total of \$12.9 billion for the National Nuclear Security Administration, which will ensure that the modernization of our nation's nuclear weapons stockpile continues.

The bill also supports vital weapons facilities related to our national security. The bill provides \$663 million for the Uranium Processing Facility in Tennessee, which keeps the project on track to be completed by 2025 at a cost of no more than \$6.5 billion.

This legislation also advances our efforts to clean up hazardous materials at Cold War sites. A total of \$6.6 billion is provided to support cleanup efforts, which is \$126 million above the president's budget request.

I am very pleased with this bill because we were able to work together under difficult conditions to fund our nation's energy and water priorities, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the bill in the coming weeks.

With that, I'd like to recognize Senator Feinstein for her remarks.

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