

Statement of Warren F. Miller, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy Designee
Director, Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management Designee
Before the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate

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Chairman Bingaman, Ranking Member Murkowski, and distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor and a privilege to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy and Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management.

I first wish to thank President Obama for asking me to join his Administration in these capacities and Secretary Chu for his confidence in my appointment. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this committee and the Department of Energy leadership team that the Secretary has assembled to advance the President's plans to secure our energy future and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. I am especially looking forward to working closely with Under Secretary Johnson in achieving these goals.

I also want to note that I am currently a resident of the great state of New Mexico. It is a point of home-state pride for me to testify before Chairman Bingaman today.

My personal journey to this nomination and to this hearing room today is the culmination of a lifetime of dedication to public service.

I come from a humble background on the South Side of Chicago, where my parents instilled in me a strong faith and demanded excellence in character and effort. Although they are no longer with us, I feel their spirits in this room, filled with love and support.

That love and support of my parents, as well as my brothers, sisters and extended family, sustained me as I left Chicago to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. Upon graduation I served in the United States Army for five years in various positions of service, including a tour in Viet Nam during the war.

After returning from Viet Nam, I left the military in 1969 and attended Northwestern University, where I earned a PhD in Nuclear Engineering.

The sense of duty instilled in me by my parents, at West Point, and during my military service was important in my decision to dedicate my career to work at Los Alamos National Laboratory, one of the nation's great research institutions dedicated to serving the country. At Los Alamos, I worked as a research engineer and held various management posts, including Deputy Laboratory Director for Science and Technology. Since retiring from Los Alamos, I have served on the faculty at Texas A&M University.

I believe that this mix of professional experiences has prepared me well to take on the nuclear energy and waste management portfolios at the Department. I am eager to return to public service for the opportunity to help address some of the great challenges of our

times. More specifically, I am motivated by the strong belief that nuclear power must play a significant role in our energy mix going forward. I know that Secretary Chu shares this belief, and I am confident that I will have his strong support should I be confirmed.

Simply put, nuclear energy is today – and must continue to be – an important part of our clean energy strategy. Today we have 104 commercial nuclear power plants operating in the United States economically and safely, providing about 20% of our nation’s electricity and 70% of our low-carbon electricity. A new generation of reactors is now poised to be deployed, with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission considering 26 license applications. I believe these applications represent the leading edge of a wave of new nuclear power plants that will be deployed in the coming decades to address electricity needs as well as process heat for industrial applications.

As we prepare to restart the nuclear industry in the United States, I think it is critical to take an integrated approach that considers the entire nuclear fuel cycle. It is for that reason that I am excited about the opportunity to serve as both the Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy and as the Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management.

If confirmed, I will work to forge an integrated approach to nuclear power. Much of my attention will be directed to helping deploy a new fleet of reactors quickly, economically and safely, generating much-needed carbon-free electricity. At the same time, I will be working to help the Secretary develop new approaches and strategies for managing spent nuclear fuel and high level waste.

I understand that Secretary Chu remains committed to meeting the Department’s obligations for managing and ultimately disposing of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. He has announced that he will convene a “blue ribbon” panel of experts to evaluate alternative approaches for meeting these obligations. The panel will provide the opportunity for a meaningful discussion on how best to address this challenging issue and will provide recommendations that will form the basis for working with Congress to revise the statutory framework for managing and disposing of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. If confirmed, one of my highest priorities will be to tackle this critical set of issues in a way that is integrated with the Department’s programs to support and promote new nuclear power.

I am also aware of the many other important programs for which I will be responsible, if confirmed. These range from conducting research, development and deployment programs for novel, new reactor designs, to providing Pu 238 heat sources to NASA for space missions. I stand ready to move these programs forward.

In summary, I am honored to appear before you today as a nominee. I am eager to take on the vital challenges of moving nuclear power in the United States forward.