The Honorable James Inhofe  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
218 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
218 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Reed:

We write to respectfully request that you include the bipartisan Nuclear Energy Leadership Act (S. 903) in the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act. The bipartisan committee amendment on nuclear energy filed by Senators Tillis, Manchin, Cramer, Heinrich, Blackburn, Duckworth, McSally, and Jones would add important provisions from NELA to the NDAA, and we support the amendment.

NELA would accelerate the commercialization of a new generation of nuclear reactors that are designed to provide energy in multiple ways beyond traditional large-scale nuclear electricity production. These new nuclear energy products are important components in a modern, clean, resilient energy system that can meet civilian and defense needs. With China and Russia now developing and exporting advanced reactors to strategically significant countries throughout the world, it is critical that the U.S. reassert leadership in this geopolitically important field.

NELA was reported out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee by voice vote and is cosponsored by nearly one-quarter of the Senate. Cosponsorship is bipartisan and includes eight members of your committee.

Throughout our country’s history, military and civilian applications of nuclear technology have developed synergistically. Breakthroughs in civilian nuclear energy benefit the military, and military breakthroughs benefit civilian energy production.

In that tradition, the committee-reported NELA includes a significant role for the Department of Defense. The bill requires the Secretary of Energy to consult and coordinate with the Secretary of Defense on a long-term nuclear power purchase agreement pilot program. Projects to be operated by the Department of Defense would be eligible for the demonstration project section of the bill. Finally, the advanced nuclear fuel section of the bill requires consideration of the fuel needs of the Department of Defense. Because of the large role for the Department of Defense, the House of Representatives referred NELA to the House Armed Services Committee, in addition to other committees.

Your committee has shown great leadership on nuclear energy issues in past National Defense Authorization Acts, including the fiscal 2019 law, which created a pilot program for microreactors.

Because of the civilian, military, and geopolitical value of U.S. leadership in nuclear energy technology, we ask that this year’s National Defense Authorization Act include the Nuclear Energy Leadership Act.

Sincerely,  

List of signers next page
June 9, 2020

American Security Project
Advanced Reactor Concepts
American Public Power Association
Advanced Nuclear Weapons Alliance (ANWA) Advocacy
Bipartisan Policy Center Action (BPC Action)
BWX Technologies, Inc.
Center for Climate and Energy Solutions
  Centrus Energy Corp.
  Clean Air Task Force
  ClearPath Action
  Duke Energy
  Edison Electric Institute
  Energy for Humanity
  Energy Northwest
  Framatome Inc.
GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy
  General Atomics
  Generation Atomic
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
  Jensen Hughes
  Kairos Power LLC
Lightbridge Corporation
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
  The Nature Conservancy
North American Young Generation in Nuclear
  Nuclear Energy Institute
  Nuclear Innovation Alliance
  NuScale
  Orano USA
  Southern Company
  TerraPower
  Terrestrial Energy USA
  Third Way
  Thorium Energy Alliance
  Ultra Safe Nuclear Corporation
  UrencoUSA
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Global Energy Institute
  U.S. Nuclear Industry Council
Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems
  Virginia Nuclear Energy Consortium
  X-Energy, LLC
  Xcel Energy