

Advance Policy Questions for David Beck
Nominee for Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs,
National Nuclear Security Administration

Duties and Qualifications

What background and experience do you possess that qualify you to perform the duties of the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)?

With over 40 years of experience in the nuclear weapons complex, I offer a broad and integrated perspective—from laboratories to production sites, and from program execution to executive leadership. During my previous tenure as NNSA Assistant Deputy Administrator for Stockpile Operations and Military Applications (1999–2004), I helped guide the organization through pivotal moments, including its formation, the post-9/11 national security transition, and the launch of life extension programs for our legacy stockpile. I also spent seven years at Los Alamos National Laboratory, serving as Associate Director for Weapons and Engineering and as Principal Deputy for Weapons Programs.

Do you believe that there are any steps that you need to take to enhance your expertise to perform the duties of the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs?

I realize my experience and education is broad, but this position encompasses an extremely wide range of technology, policy and national security nuances that no one person possesses. There are numerous senior leaders in NNSA that will complement my background, and I intend to listen as much as possible to their advice and counsel. I also intend to have several small specialized advisory groups that will help me become more informed and provide advice on complex issues.

Major Challenges and Priorities

What are the major challenges confronting the next Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs of NNSA?

Response: The need to simultaneously replace aging and failing infrastructure while continuing to meet Department of War (DoW) requirements for warhead modernization is the greatest challenge facing NNSA. Prioritizing these must-do tasks should not come at the expense of investment in expanding scientific capabilities to expedite future modernization efforts.

If confirmed, how would you address these challenges?

Response: If confirmed, I will focus significant leadership attention on project management challenges that have historically faced NNSA, and identify private industry

best practices that NNSA could benefit from. In collaboration with our partner organizations, especially DoW and Congress, I am committed to identifying challenges early and working to solve them. I will review the approaches and systems that NNSA is adopting with an eye toward identifying efficiencies. While NNSA has a significant federal oversight role of its management and operating (M&O) contractors who manage day-to-day operations at the labs, plants, and sites, I will make sure M&O contract incentives are properly used.

If confirmed, what would be your main priorities for the Office of Defense Programs?

Response: If confirmed, my priority will be ensuring the continued safety, security, and effectiveness of the nation's nuclear deterrent. I will prioritize meeting the program of record while concurrently working to address the significant challenge of modernizing our nuclear weapons infrastructure. A modern and resilient infrastructure is necessary to safely and efficiently meet the demands of the current and future nuclear weapons stockpile. Additionally, I will emphasize the Stockpile Stewardship Program, which sustains the current nuclear arsenal and support the SRT&E capabilities and state-of-the-art computational tools that advance NNSA's understanding of nuclear weapons physics and enable the development of the future stockpile without the need for underground nuclear explosive testing.

Relations with Congress

What are your views on the state of the relationship between the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs and the Senate Armed Services Committee, in particular, and with Congress, in general?

Response: I view the relationship between the Deputy Administrator for Defense Program and the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), as well as with Congress generally, as critical to the effective functioning of NNSA's nuclear security enterprise. SASC is responsible for the oversight and authorization of NNSA. If confirmed, I commit to maintaining a strong relationship with SASC built on trust and transparency.

If confirmed, what actions would you take to sustain a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between Congress and the Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs?

Response: A productive relationship hinges on transparency, consistent communication, and respect for Congress's oversight responsibilities. If confirmed, I will foster an environment of continuous dialogue and be forthcoming about program successes and challenges.

The safety, security, and functionality of the United States nuclear weapons stockpile is of paramount importance to our nation's national security, and any potential

issues that could undermine confidence in the reliability of U.S. nuclear forces are of the highest interest to Congress.

If confirmed, will you commit, without qualification, that you will promptly notify this Committee of any significant issues in the safety, security, or reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile?

Response: Yes.

Nuclear Policy and Modernization

United States nuclear forces are the bedrock of our nation's defense, underpin our most critical alliances, and have deterred nuclear aggression and great power conflict for more than 70 years. Unfortunately, long deferred investments have left us with systems and production capabilities beyond or nearing the end of their useful lives. These capabilities must be updated to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent.

Do you agree with the assessment of past Secretaries of Defense that nuclear deterrence is the nation's highest priority mission and that modernizing our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority?

Response: Yes, our nuclear stockpile is the foundation of our nation's defense. If confirmed, I will work with NNSA's counterparts in DoW to retain a modern, capable, and effective nuclear deterrent.

If confirmed, do you commit to support and advocate for full funding for efforts to comprehensively modernize the nation's nuclear weapons stockpile, including supplemental capabilities like the warhead for the sea-launched cruise missile, the supporting sustainment and production infrastructure, and experimental capabilities, and accelerate such programs wherever possible?

Response: Yes. If confirmed, I will support the modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, including SLCM-N, as well as the sustainment and recapitalization of the production and science and technology infrastructure that support it.

In its unanimous bipartisan conclusions, the 2023 Strategic Posture Commission (SPC) highlighted the rapidly growing threats facing the United States, now and in the coming decades from China's unprecedented nuclear and military force expansion, Russia's aggression and investment in destabilizing strategic capabilities, and growing regional nuclear and missile threats from North Korea and Iran. To address these threats, the SPC recommended, among other steps, that the U.S. should expedite its ongoing nuclear force modernization activities, modify its strategic nuclear force structure to account for the rapid growth of China's nuclear forces and the unprecedented need to deter two nuclear-armed peer adversaries, and urgently develop additional theater range nuclear options.

Do you agree with the conclusions of the SPC regarding global threats to U.S. interests?

Response: I agree with the SPC's findings with regards to the threat environment. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the work NNSA may have implemented to address these threats and the work that remains to utilize NNSA's capabilities to promote peace through strength and support wider global stability.

What is your understanding of how Russia, China, and North Korea have expanded and/or modernized their nuclear force capabilities?

Response: Based on public reports and the findings of the SPC, the global security environment has become more complex in recent years. If confirmed, I will seek the appropriate briefings on nuclear threats to focus NNSA's efforts unique capabilities on deterring and countering threats to U.S. interests.

In your view, how does NNSA support strategic competition with the countries highlighted by the SPC and contribute to the overall national security of the United States?

Response: NNSA's mission strongly supports the United States' ability to strategically compete with and deter our adversaries. The sustainment and modernization of our nuclear arsenal is critical to our national defense, ensuring the United States fields modern, reliable, and effective weapons to deter our adversaries. Additionally, the significant investments made to recapitalize the production enterprise clearly shows the United States' commitment to the nuclear deterrent over the long term and sends a signal to the rest of the world that the United States will not back down from fielding the modern capabilities needed to address the changing global security environment. Our commitment to the deterrent also helps dissuade adversaries from believing they can outpace our nation in the nuclear domain.

Do you support continued collaboration with the United Kingdom in the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will continue to support collaboration with the United Kingdom and its independent nuclear deterrent.

Past administrations have conducted Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) to define the upcoming overarching U.S. nuclear policy and strategy. The last NPR, conducted in 2022 by the Biden administration, emphasized the importance of modernizing our stockpile, NNSA facilities, and the workforce. Although the Secretary of Defense is the primary cabinet official responsible for policymaking regarding nuclear weapons, the support of National Nuclear Security Administration senior officials is crucial to successful execution of the nuclear mission.

If confirmed, what would be your role in the conduct of the Trump administration's NPR, should it choose to conduct one?

Response: If confirmed and the Administration decides to pursue an updated NPR, I will support the Administrator to ensure NNSA's capabilities and requirements are carefully considered as a part of this process. NNSA has unique capabilities and an important responsibility to deliver a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent for the nation.

If confirmed, what changes to the policies outlined by the 2022 NPR would you recommend the Trump administration consider?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to any deliberations that may be occurring regarding a future NPR. However, I will make sure NNSA executes the decisions and directions outlined in any potential update.

Should the upcoming NPR call for the development of additional nuclear capabilities, will you commit, if confirmed, to supporting those additions and ensuring that NNSA fully supports the new requirements?

Response: Yes.

Arms control, when effective and verifiable, has been a valuable tool for managing competition and international security concerns. In contrast, unverifiable arms control regimes observed by only one party can generate instability.

Do you believe that further reductions should be taken only within the context of a formal, verifiable arms control agreement with Russia, China and other nuclear-armed powers?

Response: Decisions regarding future arms control initiatives will be decided by the Administration. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator and work with the Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation to support any Administration priorities with regards to future arms control initiatives as required.

Relationship with the Department of Defense

If confirmed, you will support the Administrator of NNSA as a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC) and serve as co-chair of the NWC Standing and Safety Committee. The Council establishes NNSA goals and ensures NNSA activities are aligned with DOD military requirements for nuclear forces, which form the basis of the core mission of NNSA. Given the breadth of the nuclear modernization effort currently being undertaken, the Department of Defense is, in a sense, NNSA's primary customer.

How would you assess the relationship between NNSA and the Department of Defense at senior levels?

Response: I understand NNSA and DoW continue to integrate their work well and maintain a positive working relationship. NNSA and DoW must successfully integrate each of their unique capabilities, responsibilities, and schedules to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent.

Specifically, how would you assess the relationship between the office you have been nominated to lead and the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Programs, the closest equivalent in the Department of Defense?

Response: I understand the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs (ASD/NDCB) leads DoW efforts to ensure a safe, secure, and effective U.S. nuclear deterrent. I know there are many cost and schedule challenges in the nuclear modernization and enterprise recapitalization efforts, and I look forward to close collaboration with the ASD/NDCB to ensure alignment and partnership in our shared mission.

If confirmed, what steps would you recommend to improve this relationship?

Response: If confirmed, I plan to maintain regular engagements with my DoW counterparts to support the nuclear security mission.

Do you believe that NNSA is adequately responsive to the requirements set by the Department of Defense?

Response: Yes. If confirmed, I will further strengthen communication and collaboration with DoW and, if necessary, improve NNSA's ability to respond to DoW requirements. I will also work to inform DoW requirements by clearly communicating NNSA's current and planned capacity, and work to ensure that NNSA modernization and recapitalization efforts are poised to provide options for future DoW requirements.

In your view, what are the most significant issues the Council should take up in the coming years?

Response: I am not privy to the internal deliberations of the NWC. However, I believe the NWC should strategically prioritize execution of the existing program of record and identify opportunities to accelerate or augment capabilities beyond the currently planned weapon modernization programs. If confirmed, I also look forward to collaborating with my colleagues through the NWC to continue pursuing the full-scale recapitalization of the nuclear security enterprise.

If confirmed, will you commit to fully participating in NWC matters and personally attending meetings?

Response: Yes.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with the other members of the NWC and the interagency to ensure that annual budgets adequately support the modernization and sustainment of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

Response: Yes.

The Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act restructured the existing Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs into the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Deterrence, Chemical, and Biological Defense Policy and Programs. Congress took this action to cut through bureaucratic stovepipes in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and designate a single official as the principal civilian staff assistant responsible for nuclear policies, programs, and operations.

What is your understanding of the role of this position in relation to the Nuclear Weapons Council and with regard to the overall DOD relationship with the NNSA?

Response: I expect this position will facilitate close coordination within DoW and the NWC and will streamline communication between DoW and NNSA. If confirmed, I look forward to working with President Trump's nominee for this position.

As a result of concern about the relationship between the NNSA and the Department of Defense in meeting stockpile requirements, section 1632(b) of the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act set a detailed schedule of interactions between the NNSA and the NWC to ensure the NNSA weapons budget meets DOD requirements.

If confirmed, will you execute to the best of your ability the requirements of section 1632(b)?

Response: Yes.

Defense Programs

Do you believe that the United States currently possesses the capabilities to ensure the stockpile is safe, secure, and reliable – without the need to resume nuclear explosive testing?

Response: Yes. Since the United States put its nuclear test moratorium in place in 1992, the national security laboratory directors and the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command have assessed that the deployed nuclear stockpile remains safe, secure, and effective without nuclear explosive testing. If confirmed, I will continue supporting the annual assessment process and a robust science-based Stockpile Stewardship Program while also ensuring NNSA continues to comply with test readiness requirements.

What is your understanding of the current nuclear weapons stockpile modernization plan?

Response: I understand NNSA is currently executing seven simultaneous stockpile modernization programs at different stages of design, engineering, production, and delivery. The program of record includes the B61-12, W88 Alt 370, W80-4, W87-1, W93, B61-13 and the development of SLCM-N. NNSA is also recapitalizing its production infrastructure and design, certification, and assessment capabilities to support the current and future deterrent. NNSA continues to deliver modernized warheads to DoW, and I understand that the nuclear security enterprise is actively working each of these programs.

Taken together, the current program of record will run through the 2030s and cover all three legs of the nuclear triad. Successfully delivering the program of record will increase the effectiveness and reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile while providing more flexible options to the President and enhancing U.S. security. While the program of record is currently planned through the 2030s, deterrence extends further into the future. NNSA must continue to be responsive to DoW requirements while developing capabilities to meet any kind of deterrent gap that may emerge well into the future. Above all, our nuclear modernization plan must deter the full range of threats posed by adversaries and ensure the United States has an enduring safe, secure, and effective nuclear stockpile.

Do you have any concerns with this level of effort required of NNSA and, in particular, concurrency between the plants and the laboratories?

Response: If confirmed, it will be among my top priorities to ensure that NNSA and its labs, plants, and sites are able to deliver these critical programs on time and on budget. I understand that collaboration between NNSA's labs, plants, and sites has been improving in recent years, and that has resulted in tangible progress in delivering modernized weapons and recapitalized infrastructure. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting Administrator Williams' efforts to accelerate this established progress in delivering the nuclear deterrent.

Congress has authorized the Stockpile Responsiveness Program for the last several years in order to exercise design and engineering skills in support of the nuclear weapons mission, but this authority has not been fully utilized by NNSA.

If confirmed, how would you support the Stockpile Responsiveness Program and make full use of the authorities it provides NNSA?

Response: I understand that the unique capabilities of the Stockpile Responsiveness Program (SRP) allow it to advance important technology and prototype systems with new capabilities that the United States will need to respond to future threats, technology trends, and international developments. I appreciate this committee's focus and support for investing in and accelerating efforts to respond to these threats. If confirmed, I will

fully support SRP and other rapid capability efforts across the nuclear security enterprise to exercise and develop the ability to respond to emerging threats and to ensure that NNSA can recruit, train, and retain the next generation of weapon designers and engineers.

If confirmed, what are your long-term plans for the National Ignition Facility and other critical experimental facilities?

Response: The National Ignition Facility (NIF) is critical to ensuring the safety and reliability of the nation's nuclear stockpile. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the long-term plans for NIF.

What are your views of the Advanced Computing Program and what is your vision for the use of advanced computing in furtherance of NNSA missions?

Response: The Advanced Computing Program enables NNSA to expertly model multiple connected aspects of nuclear weapons performance. If confirmed, I will continue NNSA's commitment to acquire greater computational capabilities that support the use of sophisticated physics models and advanced artificial intelligence capabilities to more accurately represent nuclear phenomena and enable simulations of unprecedented resolution and precision, essential for evaluating the performance, safety, and reliability of U.S. nuclear weapons.

What role do you see in the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning tools in support of NNSA missions?

Response: I understand that NNSA is already leveraging artificial intelligence to execute its missions, and I fully expect that it will increasingly become an indispensable tool for NNSA. Alongside supercomputers, new AI-based workflows coupled with machine learning can address emerging challenges, especially those that are relevant to the Defense Programs portfolio. This includes material discovery, design optimization, and advanced manufacturing within the nuclear security enterprise. If confirmed, I will evaluate the use of AI and machine learning and application across Defense Programs' mission space.

The NNSA depends upon a unique mix of private sector and government sources for research, development, and manufacture of critical technologies to support its national security missions. However, U.S. superiority in key areas of innovation is decreasing or has disappeared. Our competitors are engaging in aggressive military modernization and advanced weaponry development. Much of the innovation in critical technologies suitable for national defense purposes is occurring outside of the traditional defense industry.

In your view, what technologies do you see as having the greatest impact on the missions of the NNSA in the future?

Response: As I understand it, applications using artificial intelligence (AI) could give NNSA a continued advantage over U.S. adversaries in the design and manufacture of nuclear weapons. AI and machine learning technologies could optimize experimental designs, analyze diagnostic data and improve facility operations.

I believe that advanced manufacturing techniques can accelerate production and improve the quality of components and systems used in nuclear weapons. If confirmed, I will work with NNSA's multiple program offices and the labs, plants and sites to leverage AI, machine learning, and advanced manufacturing for our national security missions.

Do you believe NNSA is effectively developing this technology in comparison to our adversaries?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to activities NNSA may be undertaking to develop this technology. I agree that effective development and application of advanced technologies are essential to maintaining U.S. supremacy in the nuclear arena. If confirmed, I will investigate current efforts and be prepared to provide a more complete answer.

Are NNSA's investments in these technologies appropriately focused, integrated, and synchronized across all of the administration's missions and with the DOD, where appropriate?

Response: The Secretary of Energy has been clear that AI investment and refinement is a strategic priority for the United States. His support, in addition to funding commitments from OMB and Congress, help ensure the AI mission is properly focused, integrated, and synchronized with the Administrator's priorities. Regarding DoW, I am not privy to NNSA and DoW coordination activities. If confirmed, I will ensure that Departmental advancements in AI are aligned with DoW and the broader national security mission of the U.S. Government.

In general, do you see NNSA as a good partner for innovative, private sector entities?

Yes. In my view, NNSA has maintained a long and successful partnership with private industry and is committed to fostering innovation through collaborative partnerships with private sector entities. If confirmed, I am committed to strengthening this commitment, which I understand to be a proactive approach to market research, direct industry engagement, and a reliance on innovative federal programs that stimulate technological innovation.

What steps would you take to improve the NNSA's ability to engage industry, particularly innovative firms outside the traditional Nuclear Security Enterprise?

To strengthen NNSA's ability to engage industry, particularly innovative firms beyond traditional nuclear security enterprise partners, I recommend establishing regular industry

engagement forums to solicit feedback, identify barriers to entry, and expand awareness of innovative technologies and solutions that NNSA may benefit from. I am also committed to modernizing NNSA's acquisition forecasting, expanding the agency's use of flexible procurement tools, and broadening direct federal contracting opportunities.

Stockpile Modernization

The National Nuclear Security Administration and the Department of Defense are currently undertaking the most expansive recapitalization of U.S. nuclear forces and supporting infrastructure in forty years in order to ensure the continued viability of the Nation's nuclear deterrent.

Do you support full funding and timely execution of all aspects of the ongoing nuclear modernization plan and, if confirmed, will you advocate for such efforts to continue?

Response: Yes.

Please explain your views and the programmatic risks with the following stockpile programs in meeting DOD requirements and timelines.

B61-12

Response: Based on publicly available information, I understand that NNSA completed the last production unit (LPU) of the B61-12 in December 2024 and has delivered all units to the DoW in support of deterrence requirements.

B61-13

Response: Based on publicly available information, I understand that NNSA completed the first production unit (FPU) of the B61-13 in May 2025, almost a year ahead of the original target date and less than two years after the program was first announced. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that NNSA continues delivering B61-13 units on schedule to meet DoW requirements. The B61-13 serves as a strong example of NNSA's ability to quickly adapt to the changing threat environment and deliver additional capabilities to address deterrence gaps. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the classified details of weapon modernization programs to determine if additional opportunities exist to take advantage of production equipment and processes from existing programs and streamline design gates to deliver capabilities more quickly.

W87-1

Response: Based on publicly available information, I understand that NNSA completed the first war reserve (WR) diamond-stamped plutonium pit for the W87-1 warhead at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in October 2024, reestablishing a previously dormant manufacturing capability essential for our enduring stockpile. Along with the W93 program, the W87-1 is setting the pace and quantity for NNSA's recapitalization of its pit production mission and its ability to deliver modernized W87-1 warheads at the

rate required by DoW will depend on reaching rate production for pits at LANL on schedule.

W80-4

Response: From publicly available information, I understand that NNSA expects to complete the W80-4 FPU in September 2027, ahead of the Air Force's need to support the Long-Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO). I am glad to see that the program continues reaching FPU for multiple components, including producing the first WR canned subassembly at the Y-12 National Security Complex just last month. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring the W80-4 program remains aligned with the Air Force's schedule for achieving initial operational capability (IOC) for the LRSO.

Sea-launched cruise missile warhead

Response: Based on publicly available information, I understand that earlier this year, NNSA's SLCM-N federal program office down-selected the warhead to the W80 family and continues to coordinate with DoW as missile options are evaluated. If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that NNSA remains aligned with the Navy to anticipate how their missile platform selection will impact NNSA's warhead requirements as well as working with Congress to ensure that appropriate resources are dedicated to this program so that we can meet an IOC that satisfies legislative requirements and the needs of the U.S. Navy.

W88

Response: Based on publicly available information, I understand that the W88 Alt 370 Program remains in full-scale production and will soon complete LPU. Ensuring the final deliveries of modernized W88s to the Navy are made on-schedule will be critical to ensuring the continued effectiveness of the sea-based leg of the stockpile as the W88 warhead has been deployed in the stockpile for more than 30 years.

W93

Response: Based on publicly available information, I understand that the W93 warhead program recently entered Phase 2A and is focused on ascertaining the cost and schedule associated with development and production of the W93/Mk7. The W93 will meet DoW requirements to enhance operational effectiveness of the U.S. ballistic missile submarine force. Along with the W87-1 program, the W93 is setting the pace and quantity for NNSA's recapitalization of its pit production mission and its ability to deliver modernized W93 warheads at the rate required by DoW will depend on reaching rate production for pits at LANL and the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) on schedule.

Advanced Computing

Since the Manhattan project, the Department of Energy (DOE) and the NNSA have been world leaders in advanced computing. Section 3172 of the Fiscal Year 2021 NDAA required the NNSA to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Science on the future of computing beyond exascale. Section 3138 of the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA requires the NNSA to submit a ten-year roadmap on advanced computing.

What is your assessment of advanced computing beyond exascale relevant to NNSA stockpile needs?

Response: I understand that NNSA delivered a report to Congress in November 2024 on “Computing Beyond Exascale” which details NNSA’s 10-year roadmap for acquisition of high-performance computing capabilities, in response to the requirements of Section 3138 of the FY 2022 NDAA. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing that report and understanding NNSA’s strategy for continuing to advance its world-leading advanced simulation and computing capabilities, which remain critical to both stockpile stewardship and to certifying newly modernized weapons components and designs.

Materials Under Extreme Conditions

The understanding of materials at extreme conditions is essential to the understanding of weapon performance. Specifically, there are several efforts related to plutonium that are underway to understand its behavior under extreme pressures and temperatures as well as understanding the aging mechanisms of plutonium and its behavior under static and dynamic conditions.

What are your views of the Enhanced Capabilities for Subcritical Experiments and the U1a complex enhancement project, 17-D-640? If confirmed, what results do you expect it to provide for stockpile performance?

Response: I believe that NNSA’s ongoing investments in the infrastructure, systems, and components for advancing science-based stockpile stewardship, including through the Enhanced Capabilities for Subcritical Experiments (ECSE) program, are critical to ensuring high confidence in stockpile performance. These efforts at the Principal Underground Laboratory for Subcritical Experiments, formerly called the U1a complex, are integral to maintaining a safe, secure, and reliable stockpile through the application of unparalleled science, technology, and engineering.

The NNSA has developed a long-term multi-laboratory roadmap on plutonium aging.

If confirmed, will you review this roadmap?

Response: Yes.

If confirmed, will you ensure it delivers a meaningful understanding of plutonium aging both under static and dynamic conditions for stockpile assessments and modernization?

Response: Yes.

If confirmed, will you commit to periodically inform Congress on its progress?

Response: Yes.

Inertial Confinement Fusion

Section 3137 of the Fiscal Year 2020 NDAA requires the NNSA to enter into an arrangement to assess the future of High Energy Density Physics program and assess the current and future directions of this program.

Have you reviewed this section?

Response: Yes.

If confirmed, will you and the National Academies brief the congressional defense committees on its findings?

Response: Yes.

Strategic Grade Radiation Hardened Electronics

The NNSA is a leader in the production of high-performance strategic grade radiation hardened electronics.

Please describe the current status of facilities to produce hardened electronics and plans for future upgrades to these facilities.

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the current status of NNSA's efforts to upgrade the Microsystems Engineering, Science and Applications (MESA) Complex at Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) in New Mexico and other critical facilities. I am aware that MESA, like much of NNSA's infrastructure, is currently operating under substandard conditions. If confirmed, I will work with my DOE colleagues, my federal counterparts, and additional stakeholders to review the plans for these facilities and request the funding necessary to meet our national security needs.

Defense Programs Budget

The workload of the NNSA has seen an unprecedented increase over the past several years, an increase that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. However, growth in the NNSA budget has consistently failed to keep pace with inflation and failed to fully resource a variety of projects understood to be critical capability needs, such as tritium and conventional high explosives production.

Multiple independent commissions, including Congressional Commissions on the National Defense Strategy, Reforms to the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution, and Strategic Posture of the United States have highlighted that U.S. defense investments are inadequate for addressing the international security threats facing the United States. These conclusions have been echoed by many members of Congress.

Do you agree that sustained real growth in the defense budget, including the national security functions of the Department of Energy, of at least 3 to 5 percent is necessary to meet global security challenges without incurring significant additional risk?

Response: I have not been fully briefed to be able to effectively speak to the needs of the defense budget. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator and relative stakeholders to request the funding necessary to meet our national security needs to keep America safe.

10 U.S.C. 179 requires the Nuclear Weapons Council to examine the NNSA budget before its submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to ensure it can meet DOD requirements and provide confirmation of such review to Congress.

If confirmed, do you commit, without qualification, to complying with the requirements of 10 U.S.C. 179 with regard to the annual NWC examination of the NNSA budget prior to its submission to OMB?

Response: Yes.

How would you ensure compliance with this provision, including ensuring the NWC is accorded adequate time to review the budget before its submission to OMB?

Response: I have not had the opportunity to be briefed on this, but I understand there is an existing process. If confirmed, I plan to work with the Administrator, NWC and the Secretary of Energy to facilitate review of the NNSA budget and deliver timely responses to any NWC stakeholder inquiries.

If confirmed, by what standards would you measure the adequacy of the NNSA budget?

Response: The efficacy of the implementation of NNSA's strategy documents to meet statutory obligations and accomplish the Administration's policies are key aspects of measuring the adequacy of NNSA's budget. If confirmed, I will support the Administrator in his work with NNSA colleagues, federal counterparts, and other stakeholders to determine the appropriate resource levels required for the NNSA budget to fulfill its statutory responsibilities and accomplish the Administration's policy goals. I stand ready to contribute to the Defense Programs portions of the budget in particular.

Personnel

In your judgment, what is the biggest challenge facing the NNSA in effectively and efficiently managing its workforce?

Response: I understand that recruiting and retaining highly skilled technical employees in a competitive environment is a challenge for federal agencies, including NNSA. Factors contributing to this challenge include an aging workforce, remote duty stations with high cost of living (e.g., Los Alamos, NM and Livermore, CA), and the requirement for high level security clearances. Finally, NNSA often competes with private sector jobs that offer higher salaries to the same qualified pool of people the agency would like to hire.

What recommendations do you have to improve NNSA's management of its workforce?

Response: While I am not privy to the details of NNSA's workforce management, I firmly believe in sharing and demonstrating the importance of public service, including the unique career paths that NNSA offers.

In your judgement, how effective is the Department of Energy and the NNSA at identifying, promoting, and rewarding top performers?

Response: I have not been briefed on the Department's policies and practices related to personnel. However, the success of any organization, including NNSA, depends on the quality and motivation of its people. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting Administrator Williams' efforts to recognize and reward top performers.

Similarly, how effective is the Department of Energy and the NNSA at identifying and removing underperforming or counterproductive personnel?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to personnel matters at NNSA. However, if confirmed, I will be committed to supporting Administrator Williams' efforts to facilitate a culture of accountability and performance.

If confirmed, what would you recommend be done to improve NNSA talent management?

Response: Understanding that talent management is critical to delivering NNSA missions, including Defense Programs, I am eager to support Administrator Williams' efforts to improve talent management at NNSA. The success of Defense Programs ultimately resides in its workforce. If confirmed, I will be dedicated to workforce development and talent management. NNSA must actively attract, develop, and retain the highly specialized scientific, engineering, and technical professionals who are the driving force behind addressing the complex challenges facing the nuclear security enterprise. Providing opportunities for skills training and certifications that lead to

increased opportunities and remuneration while meeting the strategic workforce needs of NNSA may prove useful.

Do you believe that NNSA has the appropriate number of civilian employees to perform its mission?

Response: If confirmed, I intend to support Administrator Williams' efforts to review if NNSA is appropriately staffed.

If not, what would be the appropriate size of the NNSA civilian workforce and what, in your view, would the additional personnel accomplish that NNSA is not able to accomplish today? If confirmed, which specific components of the NNSA would you recommend growing?

Response: I am not currently privy to details about NNSA's civilian workforce, but if confirmed, I look forward to supporting Administrator Williams' efforts to assess NNSA's current staffing levels and future needs. I am committed to ensuring that NNSA's urgent missions are properly resourced, including appropriate staffing for the Defense Programs portfolio.

Do you believe that NNSA has the appropriate capabilities—in both its civilian employee and contractor workforces—to perform its mission?

Response: Across the United States, NNSA's mission is unique. This means that its workforce needs are equally unique. If confirmed, I look forward to immersing myself in the details of the capabilities of both the federal workforce at NNSA as well as those of the M&O contractors, especially as they pertain to Defense Programs.

If not, please explain what capabilities each such workforce requires to ensure that NNSA is fully mission capable?

Response: While I have not yet been briefed on the full extent of the NNSA Federal and M&O contractor capabilities, GAO, CRS, and Inspector General reports and testimony before the SASC committee, suggest opportunities for improvement. For example, these reports point to growing needs in the project management field and emergent needs like artificial intelligence. I look forward, if confirmed, to rapidly assessing and addressing these issues at NNSA, especially as they pertain to the Defense Programs portfolio.

If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to retain critical nuclear weapons expertise in both NNSA the civilian and the contractor workforces?

Response: Strategic workforce planning, training, recruitment, and performance management actions are key tools that NNSA leverages to retain critical nuclear weapons expertise. In today's competitive workforce environment, I am committed to supporting Administrator Williams in working strategically with the NNSA federal and contractor

workforce to foster and develop internal talent pipelines within each site and across the enterprise to reduce attrition. If confirmed, I endeavor to support these initiatives to ensure that NNSA maintains the necessary talent pool to execute its mission.

What programs, policies, or tools does NNSA need to better attract the diverse range of skillsets required to support the missions of the Administration to national security focused careers?

Response: While I have not yet had the opportunity to learn about NNSA's ongoing recruitment efforts, I understand that NNSA leverages tools including the use of direct hire authority, pay supplements, and hiring incentives offers competitive compensation packages along with opportunities for professional growth to attract and retain skilled professionals. I also know that NNSA makes incentive payments for candidates who meet certain criteria and agree to sign a service agreement for positions it determines are difficult to fill, such as contracting, cybersecurity, and information technology positions, among others. These supplements contribute to the competitive demands of an ever-evolving workforce and fosters employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Facilities and Infrastructure

More than half of NNSA's infrastructure is over 40 years old, and some facilities date back to the Manhattan Project. As former Administrator Frank Klotz said in 2017, "If not appropriately addressed, the age and condition of NNSA's infrastructure will put NNSA's missions, safety of its workers, the public, and the environment at risk." Section 3111 of the Fiscal Year 2018 NDAA directed NNSA to establish the Infrastructure Modernization Initiative to reduce the backlog of deferred maintenance and repair needs by at least 30% by 2025. This goal was amended by Section 3116 of the Fiscal Year 2022 NDAA to achieve 45% by 2030.

Have you reviewed sections 3111 and 3116?

Response: Yes.

If confirmed, how would you work with the Associate Administrator for Infrastructure in order to prioritize infrastructure requiring maintenance within the Office of Defense Programs' portfolio?

If confirmed, my collaboration with the Associate Administrator for Infrastructure will be central to ensuring the operational integrity and long-term viability of NNSA's critical facilities. Prioritizing maintenance across the enterprise requires a systematic and data-driven approach coupled with continuous communication.

If confirmed, I will initiate a review process to establish a comprehensive understanding of NNSA's infrastructure across the nuclear security enterprise, which would be used to develop a transparent and objective prioritization framework.

I will meet with the Associate Administrator for Infrastructure regularly to collaboratively apply this framework and integrate maintenance priorities into short-term and long-term budget planning. My goal is to move beyond reactive repair to a proactive risk-informed approach.

While you will not be responsible for constructing facilities to meet Defense Program needs, if confirmed, you will be responsible for setting facility requirements to meet Department of Defense stockpile needs through the NWC. A thorough understanding of how these requirements translate into facility cost and schedule is essential. If requirements are unrealistic or unstable this will translate into cost and schedule overruns and ultimately the credibility of the stockpile program. Projects such as the Modern Pit Facility, Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement – Nuclear Facility, Uranium Processing Facility, and Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility are all examples of past NNSA efforts plagued by cost overruns, schedule delays, and on certain occasion, cancellation.

In your opinion, to what extent did unrealistic requirements contribute to failures in these projects?

Response: While I am not familiar with full history of each of these projects, I agree that unrealistic or changing requirements certainly can be a major contributor to poor project performance. If confirmed, I will look closely at NNSA's current capital project portfolio to understand and address all factors contributing to major project challenges facing NNSA.

To what extent do you believe a lack of funding prioritization may have contributed to inefficiencies in these projects?

Response: While I am not familiar with the full history of each of these projects, I agree that lack of funding prioritization can be a major contributor to poor project performance. This Congress has provided strong support to date for NNSA's project portfolio, and continued support will be critical to our ability to improve project performance. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to make that happen.

If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the committee is promptly informed of significant concerns with the feasibility of achieving major facility requirements, including overviews of likely required resources or statutory/regulatory changes that would be needed to achieve such requirements?

Response: Yes.

DOE Order 413 "Program and Project Management of Capital Assets" governs the acquisition of capital assets exceeding a Total Project Cost of \$50 million. Most, if not all, Defense Program facilities are covered under DOE Order 413.

Have you reviewed DOE Order 413?

Response: Yes.

Please describe the critical decision points under DOE Order 413 and what you believe the predominant risks are associated with each decision point as they pertain to correctly determining a cost and schedule for high hazard defense program facilities.

Response: Critical Decisions (CDs) in the Department's Project Management Order (DOE Order 413.3B) are:

- *CD-0 Approve Mission Need* – The first stage confirms that a gap in capability exists at the agency and that further work is required to define alternatives to meet/close the gap.

Risks include defining requirements, scope, or design work necessary to generate cost or schedule estimates with confidence. Only a Rough Order of Magnitude estimate can be estimated at this early stage and wide uncertainties (in excess of 100%) in the cost range are possible.

- *CD-1 Approve Alternative Selection and Cost Range* – CD-1 approves the selection of an alternative to close the capability gap identified at CD-0 and a preliminary cost and schedule range to execute the selected alternative. This includes a conceptual design of the selected alternative and, if applicable, that design and construction of facility or capability is the best alternative. The uncertainty of the cost range here should become narrower as the basic layout of areas of the facility is completed and major pieces of equipment are selected.

Risks are related to the relatively low design maturity (potentially the technology maturity of the plant's equipment at the conceptual design stage), especially for first-of-a-kind, nuclear, and high hazard facilities. An Independent Cost Estimate (ICE) is performed to try to provide assurance to the decisionmaker about the cost and schedule estimates proposed for approval. Factors such as quality, safety, and security make estimating the cost and schedule of these facilities challenging. Between CD-1 and CD-2, requests can be made to approve long-lead procurements of equipment as needed or to begin site preparation.

- *CD-2 Approve Performance Baseline* – CD-2 marks the approval of a Performance Baseline against which the project's performance is measured and a commitment to external stakeholders, including Congress, occurs. In NNSA, this is often simultaneously approved with CD-3. At this stage, for high hazard facilities, the detailed design is essentially complete, and the estimates are more reliable given the nature of the facility. An ICE is performed to provide assurance to the decisionmaker about the cost and schedule estimates proposed for approval.

Risks include having the resources (people, funding, availability of materials, facilities, etc.) available to design and build one-of-a-kind facilities, especially over extended periods of time (sometimes longer than 7+ years).

- *CD-3 Approve Start of Construction/Execution* – CD-3 marks the approval of start of construction and, in NNSA, is typically approved simultaneously with CD-2. It authorizes the award of construction subcontracts.

The risks here are like those at CD-2, including availability of funding, vendors, people, needed equipment, systems and components, etc., and maintaining the availability for these things over an extended period.

- *CD-4 Approve Start of Operations or Project Completion* – CD-4 marks the end of the project work, except for some final costs associated with doing financial project closeout.

Risks are minimal, with closeout of any disputed costs with vendors being finalized potentially changing after this CD.

- *Project Closeout* – This represents financial closeout of the project work, no additional charges to project accounts can be made and the risk associated with this decision is essentially zero.

The following efforts are underway to re-establish or expand production capabilities to meet Defense Program needs. Some efforts have been restarted after being dormant for 30 or more years, while others are overextended in capacity. Please describe what you understand are the major programmatic risks and what specifically can be done to overcome these risks.

Plutonium pit production

Response: The major programmatic risks to our ability to produce plutonium pits are: 1) cost escalation, overly optimistic project schedules, and technical challenges inherent in re-establishing the facilities, equipment, processes, and trained staff in the nuclear security enterprise to meet an 80 pit-per-year production requirement, and 2) the ability of the nuclear security enterprise to adjust how it operates to meet these challenges. To adequately address these risks, we must empower the NNSA federal and contractor workforce to challenge the status quo of how NNSA does business. If confirmed, I commit to work closely with Congress and the NNSA team to identify ways in which NNSA can meet these challenges and ensure the continued reliability of the nation's deterrent.

Uranium processing

Response: NNSA ensures an adequate supply of enriched uranium (EU) to meet all mission needs through a material recycle and recovery program at the Y-12 National Security Complex. The legacy EU recycle and recovery processes are housed in Building

9212, an 80-year-old facility that does not meet modern industry standards and nuclear safety requirements. NNSA has started phasing out Building 9212 operations, which will eventually be reconstituted in the new Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) and enduring facilities. To leverage the opportunities created by this transition, NNSA is phasing out existing processes and deploying new technologies to increase the overall safety and efficiency of EU operations. If confirmed, I will review the status of the project and work with stakeholders to understand risks and identify any opportunities to accelerate delivery and commissioning of UPF.

Lithium processing

Response: The Lithium Processing Facility (LPF) is needed to replace the current capability housed in Building 9204-02 (Beta-2), which has degraded beyond repair. Beta-2 is more than 80 years old and has serious structural deficiencies and frequent equipment outages, negatively affecting operations and program requirements. The transition from Beta-2 to LPF will leverage new technologies to optimize operations, increase efficiency, and provide a safer work environment for lithium recovery, purification, and component fabrication. NNSA's transition strategy lays out a path for shutdown and cleanout of Beta-2 processes, facilitating the transfer of Beta-2 to the Excess Facilities Disposition Program for deactivation. If confirmed, I will review the status of the project and work with stakeholders to understand risks and identify any opportunities to accelerate delivery of the modernized lithium processing capabilities necessary for weapons activities.

Depleted Uranium processing

Response: NNSA has successfully restarted dormant production capabilities for alloying depleted uranium and producing binary components to meet program of record demands. The enterprise is now focused on employing streamlined approaches to strengthen the supply chain for high purity depleted uranium and to construct new facilities using innovative approaches. I understand NNSA is pursuing the Agile Radiation Case Capability campus to establish floorspace for newer, more efficient technologies and to expand manufacturing capacity. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about NNSA's phased construction approach that prioritizes by mission need and identified project risks.

High explosives fabrication for weapons modernization efforts

NNSA employs numerous explosive facilities distributed across DoW and NNSA to deliver main charge high explosives and energetic components for the nuclear deterrent. Most of today's facilities and equipment were designed and built during the Cold War or earlier and cannot easily adapt to changing requirements nor emerging capabilities, processes, and products. There is critical need for timely, extensive infrastructure and production process modernization to meet future mission requirements. NNSA has embarked on planning and executing a strategy to achieve an agile, resilient, reliable, and safe enterprise that will meet all programmatic requirements for high explosives and energetics production to support our stockpile mission.

NNSA continues to modernize the high explosives production capabilities across the complex.

- At Pantex, infrastructure modernization projects such as the High Explosives Science and Engineering (HESE) project and the High Explosives Synthesis, Formulation, and Production (HESFP) project will provide more efficient facilities that can strengthen or rekindle capabilities on site that may have been dormant for years.
- At Los Alamos National Laboratory, the Energetic Materials Characterization project will modernize and co-locate facilities to for more efficient production activities.

Expansion of the Kansas City production plant

Response: As the primary production site for non-nuclear components for NNSA, the current KCNSC main campus facility was developed in early-2000s with a sizing expectation of a single weapons modernization program in production and a single weapons modernization program in development. Operations at the current KCNSC main campus began in 2014, but the mission scope of NNSA has expanded to encompass seven active weapon programs in production and/or development for delivery in the mid-2030s since that time. The objective state for KCNSC includes significant growth to meet all future workload requirements.

To meet this goal, NNSA invested in the Kansas City Short-Term Expansion Project (KC STEP) followed by the Kansas City Non-Nuclear Expansion Transformation (KCNEXT).

- KC STEP is a portfolio of linked independent projects that will allow for rapid, agile, and incremental growth capable of flexing to continually develop mission requirements in an ever-changing threat environment.
- KCNEXT is a phased approach to provide an additional 1.1 million square feet of production space and associated support facilities.

Re-establishment of a weapons effect and survivability infrastructure

Response: I understand that DOE/NNSA is pursuing the Combined Radiation Environments for Survivability Testing (CREST) capability to replace the end-of-life Annular Core Research Reactor facility, with conceptual designs currently being developed. This capability supports DOE/NNSA testing in multiple radiation environments using the same experimental platform.

Office of Cost and Program Evaluation

In 2014, largely in response to a string of the large project management failures, Congress created the Office of Cost Estimation and Program Evaluation (CEPE) in the Department of Energy. CEPE was modeled on the DOD Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE).

CEPE reports directly to the Administrator for Nuclear Security. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that CEPE has adequate access to you and other

senior leaders in your organization, as necessary and appropriate to support the Administrator effectively?

Response: Per 50 USC 2411, the “Director shall be the principal advisor to the Administrator, the Deputy Secretary of Energy, and the Secretary of Energy with respect to cost estimation and program evaluation for the Administration.”

If confirmed, I will foster an environment of transparency and open communication between Defense Programs and CEPE. This partnership is essential for providing the Administrator with the analysis needed to make informed decisions.

NNSA Site Offices

While you will have programmatic responsibility for carrying out the NNSA’s responsibility to meet DOD requirements, the NNSA Site Offices are responsible for day-to-day operations of the NNSA sites and ensuring that their operations are carried out in a safe and secure manner while assessing the performance of their Management and Operating contractors.

If confirmed, please describe how you will work with the site offices to meet your DOD programmatic requirements.

Response: If confirmed, I will meet with NNSA’s field office managers and M&O leadership on an appropriate cadence to ensure their daily operations remain aligned with NNSA and DoW programmatic requirements. I also commit to visiting each of the sites as soon as feasible to ensure that federal and contractor staff at the sites understand the urgency behind our weapons modernization efforts and how their continued daily efforts ensure that NNSA is able to continue delivering warheads to the DoW at the rate required by our deterrence needs.

If confirmed, will you promptly report any issues with respect to the Site Offices that you believe will encumber your ability to meet your DOD requirements?

Response: Yes.

Plutonium Strategy

NNSA has selected two sites for plutonium pit production: Los Alamos will produce approximately 30 pits per year and the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) will produce up to 50 pits per year, for a projected two-site total of no fewer than 80 pits per year. These production targets were established several years ago, prior to revelations about the speed and scope of potential adversary nuclear force expansions.

Do you believe and overall production target of no fewer than 80 pits per year is sufficient to meet future demands for modernizing and adapting the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile?

Response: While I have not yet been briefed on the projected demands of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, I understand that in 2018, the Nuclear Weapons Council endorsed NNSA's two-site approach to supply no fewer than 80 war reserve plutonium pits per year in alignment with DoW requirements. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with NNSA and leadership across the nuclear security enterprise to achieve full rate production and continue to accelerate the production capacity required to support the nuclear deterrent as much as possible.

Do you support the two-site solution, initiated under President Trump's first term, for meeting statutory requirements for pit production?

Response: Yes.

What are your views on the January 16, 2025, district court settlement halting installation of classified equipment and construction of associated facilities at SRPPF until such time as NNSA prepares a new Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement?

Response: I am aware that the settlement agreement that brought an end to the lawsuit challenging the National Environmental Protection Act work done in support of pit production was mutually agreed upon by NNSA and the plaintiffs. Per the Agreement, NNSA will conduct a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and issue a Record of Decision based on the findings of the PEIS. The Department agreed to complete this process within two and a half years and provide for enhanced public participation. If confirmed, I plan to carefully track this matter to ensure that pit production and SRPPF are not negatively affected.

What are your views on the Los Alamos site and its capabilities to achieve its pits per year production target to support the demands of the ongoing stockpile program?

Response: Producing the first war reserve plutonium pit for the W87-1 nuclear warhead last year is a major achievement for the nuclear security enterprise. I am eager to prioritize rate production of plutonium pits at LANL and continue exploring opportunities to accelerate the production capacity required to support the nuclear deterrent if confirmed.

SRPPF has been plagued by issues with design and construction since the decision was made to convert the partially completed Mixed Oxide Fabrication Facility into a facility for producing plutonium pits. The project also experienced significant cost growth and delays due to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic spike in inflation.

What is your understanding of the status of SRPPF and the project’s likelihood of supporting NNSA efforts to meet the statutory requirement to produce no fewer than 80 plutonium pits per year?

Response: SRPPF is planned to produce no fewer than 50 War Reserve pits per year and serve as a secure, reliable and efficient pit production facility. I understand that NNSA previously notified Congress of its inability to reach plutonium pit rate production by 2030. If confirmed, I will prioritize the advancement of SRPPF to enable NNSA to deliver plutonium pits at the rates needed to support stockpile modernization while mitigating further delays and cost growth.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to improve the performance of the project, both in terms of cost management and construction efficiency?

Response: If confirmed, my priority will be to identify opportunities to accelerate the project to meet mission needs. I also look forward to improving accountability for the project. If confirmed, I will prioritize understanding NNSA’s project management practices to prevent past challenges from repeating themselves.

Uranium Strategy and Tritium Production

Since the United States Enrichment Corporation (USEC) ceased enrichment operations in 2013, DOE has relied on the existing stockpile of highly enriched uranium (HEU) to support Naval Nuclear Propulsion, as well as the down-blending of recycled HEU to meet requirements for unobligated LEU for tritium production, but the available supply of HEU is finite. To address this supply limitation, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 National Defense Authorization (NDAA) directed the Secretary of Energy to identify two to four sites for reestablishing unobligated domestic uranium enrichment, for both defense and civilian energy purposes, with an eye to begin construction no later than 2027.

If confirmed, will you support the Secretary of Energy in meeting the requirement in the FY 2025 NDAA outlined above?

Response: Yes, and I look forward to being briefed on NNSA’s current plans to meet this requirement.

The FY 2025 NDAA specified that plans for reestablishing the enrichment capability should focus on “modular, scalable facilities”. What are your ideas for how to proceed with such an effort?

Response: If confirmed, I will support NNSA’s pursuit of a flexible and resilient domestic uranium enrichment deployment strategy to meet defense mission requirements and the requirements in the FY 2025 NDAA.

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in 2014 entitled “Interagency Review Needed to Update U.S. Position on Enriched Uranium That Can Be Used for Tritium Production” concluded that the DOE’s policy on identification of obligated uranium was based on three international agreements and a series of policy decisions. Of the three agreements, GAO concluded that only one explicitly addressed tritium production, but that past State Department findings had consistently interpreted the other two agreements as imposing peaceful use restrictions on LEU for tritium production.

Do you believe this GAO reading of all three agreements remains consistent with U.S. policy goals? In your view, should the State Department’s prior findings be reevaluated?

Response: I am not familiar with the technical specifics of this report, but, if confirmed, will seek to determine whether actions are necessary to address these findings. Ensuring a continued supply of tritium is critical to the success of NNSA’s mission. I understand that this report is more than a decade old. If confirmed, I would also seek to understand whether the views of the treaty partners have evolved. If confirmed, I would ensure NNSA’s production of tritium is consistent with U.S. international agreements and governmental policy.

Section 3138 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 directed the Department of Energy to “determine whether the Agreement [between the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland] for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defense Purposes, signed at Washington, July 3, 1958, . . . permits the United States to obtain low-enriched uranium for the purposes of producing tritium in the United States.” The Secretary of Energy affirmed that such procurement of low enriched uranium can occur.

What are your views on the accuracy of the Secretary of Energy’s determination in this regard?

Response: I support continued collaboration with the United Kingdom. I believe that all options should be on the table and thoroughly considered. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary, the Administrator, and the Administration to evaluate the previous determination.

In your opinion, is NNSA’s current tritium strategy, in terms of quantity and schedule, sufficient to support such a marked increase?

Response: While I am not privy to the details of NNSA’s tritium strategy, if confirmed, I look forward to evaluating this strategy to meet and sustain tritium demand and adjusting it as required to ensure national security requirements are met.

Do you believe NNSA should be investigating alternative tritium production methods besides the current program of providing material for the Tennessee Valley Authority to irradiate in the Watts Bar reactors?

Response: If confirmed, I will support actions that ensure NNSA continues to be able to meet its tritium production requirements in support of delivering modernized weapons to the DoW. NNSA's partnership with TVA has proven successful to date in supporting an uninterrupted on-schedule delivery of tritium for stockpile needs, but I am always open to alternative methods to meet stockpile requirements.

Regulation and Oversight

Staff at NNSA's national laboratories often complain that they are overburdened by regulation and oversight, both internal and external, and that these contribute to the challenges in staying under cost and on schedule for major projects.

Do you believe that environmental, safety, and construction regulations are properly applied to NNSA projects and operations?

Response: While I am not currently privy to NNSA's application of environmental, safety, and construction regulations, if confirmed, I look forward to ensuring that NNSA missions are successfully executed while maintaining safety and appropriately protecting the workforce, the public, and the environment. I am aware and supportive of Energy Secretary Wright's decision to ease some permitting rules and regulations for construction projects at the Department of Energy's national labs.

Do you believe these regulations undermine effective performance by the labs and efficient mission execution overall?

Response: Streamlining regulations, standardizing performance expectations, and implementing a common-sense approach to the interpretation and application of requirements is key to achieving enterprise-wide efficiency, innovation, and modernization. If confirmed, I will work with Energy Secretary Wright to seek out and deliver these innovations for the Department as a whole. While I am not privy to the implementation of regulations across the enterprise, I understand that inefficiencies can arise from overly strict interpretations of and approaches to regulatory requirements. I am committed to exercising existing flexibilities, such as exemptions and equivalencies, to establish necessary controls while also providing regulatory relief where possible.

In your view, are the NNSA labs and production facilities subject to the appropriate level of oversight from the NNSA, DOE, the EPA, the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and/or Congress?

Response: NNSA's national security missions are essential, but the work NNSA performs can be hazardous and requires appropriate oversight. It is important that oversight does not lead to risk avoidance that impairs the ability to achieve NNSA's essential national

security missions. Oversight must not result in risk aversion. NNSA's national laboratories, production plants and sites currently have systems and activities that provide a high level of oversight that meet the needs of regulatory drivers.

Are there certain oversight processes that are unnecessarily duplicative or purely bureaucratic, in your view?

Response: NNSA program and project management for the acquisition of capital assets is governed by DOE Order 413.3B. I recognize that its implementation can, at times, be burdensome, despite the important structure and oversight it provides. If confirmed, I will remain committed to ensuring that critical work is carried out in a timely and efficient manner within the framework of this order. In order to promote mission success, I will engage with stakeholders to identify and collaboratively address any inefficiencies arising from current oversight processes.

If confirmed, what changes in regulatory or oversight structures would you recommend, and why?

Response: I understand that DOE Order 413.3B governs program and project management for the acquisition of capital assets, including for NNSA. While it is an important aspect of rigorous oversight, I understand it can be overly burdensome. I look forward to working with Energy Secretary Wright and Administrator Williams to ensure NNSA's important work is efficiently executed under the order. If confirmed, I will work with our stakeholders to address inefficiencies that may result from existing oversight processes.

Notification of Congress

If confirmed, will you work with the Administrator of NNSA to notify Congress promptly of any significant issues in the safety, security or reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile?

Response: Yes.

Sexual Harassment

What is your assessment of the current climate regarding sexual harassment and gender discrimination in the NNSA?

Response: If confirmed, I take seriously the responsibility to increase awareness and emphasize prevention and reporting of sexual harassment and sex discrimination at DOE and NNSA. If issues related to sexual harassment and sex discrimination arise, I will consult with the appropriate stakeholders in DOE and NNSA and take action.

If confirmed, what actions would you take were you to receive or become aware of a complaint of sexual harassment or discrimination from an employee of the DOE, NNSA, or a component thereof?

Response: Sexual harassment and discrimination is not tolerable. I will ensure that complaints of this nature arising from NNSA or contractor employees are taken seriously across the enterprise and will ensure that employees who raise such complaints are treated in accordance with all federal laws on regulations.

Congressional Oversight

In order to exercise legislative and oversight responsibilities, it is important that this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive timely testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information from the executive branch.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to appear and testify before this committee, its subcommittees, and other appropriate committees of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to provide this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs such witnesses and briefers, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information, as may be requested of you, and to do so in a timely manner? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to consult with this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs, regarding your basis for any delay or denial in providing testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information requested of you? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to keep this committee, its subcommittees, other appropriate committees of Congress, and their respective staffs apprised of new information that materially impacts the accuracy of testimony, briefings, reports, records—including documents and electronic communications, and other information you or your organization previously provided? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, and on request, to provide this committee and its subcommittees with records and other information within their oversight jurisdiction, even absent a formal Committee request? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to respond timely to letters to, and/or inquiries and other requests of you or your organization from individual Senators who are members of this committee? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to ensure that you and other members of your organization protect from retaliation any military member, federal employee, or contractor employee who testifies before, or communicates with this committee, its subcommittees, and any other appropriate committee of Congress? Please answer with a simple yes or no.

Response: Yes.