

Opening Statement of Hon. Brandon M. Williams
Nominee for Undersecretary of Energy for Nuclear Security
Before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services
April 8, 2025

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, thank you for inviting me to be considered by this committee for this important position. Also, thank you, Senator Fischer—I know that the mission of the NNSA is near and dear to your heart. And thank you to all of the distinguished members of this critically important committee; it is truly an honor to appear before you today.

I would like to offer my appreciation to President Trump for nominating me. I am honored and grateful to be considered, and if confirmed, I will work diligently to strengthen the capability, credibility, and communication of our strategic deterrence. I share the President's commitment to peace through strength and look forward to serving under Energy Secretary Wright's leadership.

I would like to recognize my family who could attend today's hearing. First is my beloved wife, Stephanie, of 32 years. As a Navy Ensign, I asked her father—an Army Colonel with three Bronze Stars and two Vietnam combat tours—if I could have his daughter's hand in marriage. Stephanie has outranked me ever since. As a child, she lived in Germany during her father's battalion command which protected the most critical territory in Europe—the Fulda Gap. Stephanie experienced firsthand the Soviet threat and the specter of nuclear war. We both have a visceral understanding of the importance of strategic deterrence.

I am pleased that our son, Marshall, could also be present today.

At the Department of Energy, the National Nuclear Security Administration has functioned in relative obscurity for many decades but has recently been thrust back into the public consciousness. In my estimation, the men and women of the NNSA comprise one of the greatest scientific and engineering organizations in human history. They are exceptional machinists, technicians, marksmen, logisticians, engineers, computer and data scientists, physicists, and weapons designers. This workforce, since the Manhattan Project, continues to ensure the safety, security, reliability, and effectiveness of our nuclear stockpile. If given the opportunity to lead this extraordinary organization, I will do so humbly, in the shadow of great Americans like Admiral Rickover, Ernest Lawrence, and Robert Oppenheimer.

I have watched many hours of questioning and testimony from this committee, and I know that you are aware that the hour is late and the need is urgent to restore our nuclear weapons enterprise. During your hearings, I have repeatedly heard the concerns of the

military commanders of our strategic forces. This committee has provided critical bipartisan leadership and keen foresight to respond to the growing threat from China, Russia, and others. You have set in motion the necessary modernization efforts. Respect is also due to your colleagues and my friends in the House of Representatives.

As a Member of Congress, I served as the Chairman of the Energy Subcommittee for the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, where I had oversight over our prestigious DoE National Labs and was privileged to visit many of them. Independent of my committee obligations, I actively sought briefings from NNSA leadership and staff on the challenges and needs of maintaining and strengthening our strategic deterrence posture. I am aware of the many historic challenges that NNSA now faces. Again, it is with humility that I ask to be entrusted with this important mission.

I am deeply committed to America's strategic deterrence. In May 1989, I witnessed firsthand the student protests in Tiananmen Square and, later that fall, enrolled in an introductory class on Strategic Deterrence and soon volunteered for nuclear submarine duty. During my nearly six years of Navy service, I made six strategic deterrence patrols in the Pacific aboard the ballistic missile submarine USS Georgia. On board, I served as the strategic missile officer, nuclear weapons safety officer, nuclear weapons security officer, and nuclear weapons radiological controls officer. I was responsible for the launch codes on Georgia and, for thousands of hours, supervised the submarine's nuclear reactor and engine room operations.

I then completed a Master's degree at the Wharton School in Operations and Finance and later co-founded a software company dedicated to modernizing industrial manufacturing.

My mission, if confirmed by this esteemed body, is to accelerate the restoration of our nuclear weapons enterprise, rebuild trust with Congress and with NNSA's customers—the Department of Defense, STRATCOM, the Department of State, and others—and prioritize strengthening the relationships with our nuclear assurance partners overseas. The U.S. Department of Energy and NNSA will continue to meet the strategic defense mission of this nation and our allies.

As the world grows more perilous through nuclear proliferation, if confirmed, I will work to keep nuclear materials out of the hands of bad actors and to protect Americans at home from nuclear terrorism.

I am truly humbled by this consideration and look forward to answering your questions.