Senate Armed Services Committee
Advance Policy Questions for Brandon Williams
Nominee for Appointment to be Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security and Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration

Duties and Qualifications

In accordance with title 42, U.S. Code, section 7132(c)), the Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security serves concurrently as the Administrator for Nuclear Security of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), as set forth in title 50, U.S. Code, section 2402. The Under Secretary must have an extensive background in national security, organizational management, and appropriate technical fields, and be well-qualified to manage the nuclear weapons, nonproliferation, and materials disposition programs of the NNSA in a manner that advances and protects the national security of the United States.

What background, experience, and expertise do you possess that qualify you for appoint as the Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and Administrator for Nuclear Security, National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)?

Response: As a Veteran of the United States Navy Nuclear Submarine Service, I believe my experience completing six strategic deterrent patrols aboard the USS Georgia (SSBN 729B) while serving as the Strategic Missile Officer, Nuclear Safety Officer, Nuclear Weapons Radiological Controls Officer, and Nuclear Weapons Security Officer, has never been more important at NNSA. My Nuclear Navy experience qualifies me to supervise the operation of two naval nuclear reactor designs (5SW and S8G), which I have thousands of hours of supervisory experience, and which I was designated as the naval courier for the receipt of nuclear weapons and materials for USS Georgia. After leaving the Nuclear Navy, I pursued a graduate degree from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. Following which, I founded a software company focused on modernizing and securing industrial controls for process manufacturing industries. Most recently, I served as a Member of Congress for New York's 22nd Congressional District, in which capacity I was named Chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Energy Subcommittee, which I had oversight authority of DOE National Labs. If confirmed, I believe this background, experience, and expertise will best equip me for the role that I have been nominated for.

What is your understanding of the duties and functions of the Under Secretary for Nuclear Security? Of the duties and functions of the Administrator, NNSA?

Response: If confirmed, as Under Secretary for Nuclear Security, I will report directly to Energy Secretary Wright. My role will be to inform and execute his and the President's vision on nuclear security and the Department of Energy's (DOE) mission. If confirmed, as NNSA Administrator, I will be responsible for executing NNSA's missions of maintaining and enhancing the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile; reducing the global danger from weapons of mass destruction;

providing the U.S. Navy with safe and militarily effective nuclear propulsion; and responding to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the United States and abroad.

Do you perceive there to be any differences or dissonance between the requirements of each such position? If confirmed, under whose authority, direction, and control, would you serve in each such position?

Response: The Under Secretary for Nuclear Security serves as NNSA Administrator. Per the NNSA Act, "in carrying out the functions of the Administrator, the Under Secretary shall be subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary."

If confirmed, what additional duties and responsibilities, if any, do you expect that the Secretary of Energy would prescribe for you?

Response: I am unaware of any additional duties and responsibilities that I may be assigned at this time.

If confirmed, what would be your main priorities in each of the roles for which you have been nominated?

Response: My main priority for the NNSA is to deter the enemies of the United States and of those allies with whom we have extended our deterrent shield. I am to do this by building and maintaining strategic weapons that are safe, secure, effective, and reliable. I will emphasize meeting the programs of record for our customers first. I want to prioritize the rebuilding of the nuclear weapons enterprise, deliver on the Life Extension Programs (LEP) Programs of Record, innovate in our ability to respond to emergency and emergent threats and continue to pursue non-proliferation and counter-proliferation priorities. I also firmly believe that NNSA must rebuild credibility with NNSA customers, including the Department of Defense.

What are the major challenges you would expect to confront if confirmed as the Under Secretary and Administrator?

Response: The fundamental challenge NNSA faces is the need to simultaneously replace its aging and failing infrastructure while continuing to meet Department of Defense (DoD) requirements for warhead modernization. Maintaining leadership focus on these priorities should not come at the expense of investment in expanding scientific capabilities to expedite future modernization efforts. In addition, nuclear proliferation challenges are growing in an increasingly complex threat environment.

If confirmed, how would you address these challenges?

Response: If confirmed, I will focus significant leadership attention on historical project management challenges, and identify best practices used in private industry that could be adapted for use at NNSA. I will work to develop collaborative relationships with partner organizations, especially DoD and Congress, to identify challenges early and work to

identify solutions. I will review the approaches and systems that NNSA is adopting the nuclear deterrent 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 utilized.

If confirmed, what duties and responsibilities would you assign to the Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator?

Response: The Principal Deputy Administrator, subject to the authority of the Administrator, shall oversee the implementation and accountability of contracts, procurement, administrative, budget, and planning activities. In addition, the Principal Deputy Administrator will engage with stakeholders, partners, and suppliers to NNSA to develop efforts for resiliency, efficiency, and innovation to the nuclear weapons enterprise.

Conflicts of Interest

Federal ethics laws, to include 10 U.S.C. §208, prohibit government employees from participating in matters where they, or certain family members or organizations with which they have certain relationships, have a financial interest.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, to disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including investments, business ties, family relationships, or other connections that could be perceived as influencing your decision making?

Response: Yes.

Do you agree, without qualification, if confirmed, that if a conflict of interest arises, you will recuse yourself from participating in any relevant decisions regarding that specific matter?

Response: Yes.

Do you commit, without qualification, if confirmed, to decision-making on the merits and exclusively in the public interest, without regard to private gain or personal benefit?

Response: Yes.

NNSA Organization and Management Structure

The NNSA Act of 2000, as amended, establishes that the Administrator for Nuclear Security ". . . shall be subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary [of Energy]. Such authority, direction, and control may be delegated only to the Deputy Secretary of Energy, without re-delegation."

What is your view on the relationship between the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator of NNSA in statute and in recent practice?

Response: Per the NNSA Act, NNSA is subject to the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary. To ensure NNSA is successful in executing its mission, I believe the NNSA Administrator must have a robust relationship with the Secretary of Energy and Deputy Secretary of Energy. If confirmed, I will work closely with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary to bolster NNSA's efficiency and impact.

How is the "semi-autonomous" nature of the NNSA, as set forth in the by the NNSA Act, reflected in NNSA's organizational structure? What makes NNSA different from the domains of the other Under Secretaries of the Department of Energy (DOE)—in both law and practice?

Response: The NNSA Act established NNSA as a semi-autonomous organization under DOE to execute its national security programs. This statutory authority is unique in that it provides the Administrator authority over key operational functions, such as policy development, personnel, and procurement. The NNSA Act also delineates specific identified positions, such as the Administrator, Principal Deputy Administrator for Nuclear Security, Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, Deputy Administrator for Naval Reactors, and a General Counsel.

With a view to improving organizational management and operational effectiveness, would you recommend any changes to the structure of NNSA?

Response: Independent studies in recent years have noted that NNSA's management of the nuclear security enterprise is generally improving. There is always room for improvement. Given NNSA's unique structure and relationships with its management and operating contractors (M&O), sustaining transparent communication and facilitating productive relationships with stakeholders is fundamental to effective governance and management.

NNSA must deliver on its missions cost-effectively and efficiently. If confirmed, I will work with the NNSA leadership team to ensure that the agency executes program and project management efficiently, with the highest acumen and in a fiscally responsible manner.

Relationship with the Department of Defense (DOD)

If confirmed, you will be a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC), together with the Under Secretaries of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Policy, and Research and Engineering, as well as the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command. Since the 1946 Atomic Energy Act, when it was designated as the "Military Liaison Committee," the primary purpose of the NWC is to

serve as the civilian-military interface and set the military requirements for the nuclear weapons stockpile, which form the basis of the core mission of NNSA. The Department of Defense (DOD) is, in a sense, NNSA's primary customer.

How would you assess the relationship between NNSA and the DOD, at both senior management levels, as well as at working levels?

Response: I have not yet had the opportunity to witness these relationships first-hand, but I understand NNSA and DoD continue to integrate their work well and maintain a positive working relationship. NNSA and DoD must continue to successfully integrate each of their unique capabilities, responsibilities, and schedules to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent.

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

Response: If confirmed, I plan to maintain regular engagements with my DoD counterparts to ensure consistent communications and coordination so that NNSA remains a dynamic partner ready to support the nuclear security mission.

Do you believe that NNSA is adequately responsive to the requirements set by the DOD?

Response: Yes, though I understand the demand on the nuclear security enterprise has significantly increased. If confirmed, I will work to ensure continual communication and collaboration with DoD and, if necessary, improve NNSA's ability to respond to DoD requirements. Likewise, I will endeavor to inform DoD requirements by communicating NNSA's current and planned capacity, and work to ensure that NNSA modernization and recapitalization efforts are poised to provide options for future DoD requirements.

Do you believe it important for the NWC to ensure the NNSA is adequately funded through the interagency budget process to meet DOD's requirements?

Response: I believe NNSA must submit a budget capable of supporting the activities necessary to meet DoD requirements. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary of Energy, the Office of Management and Budget, and the NWC to make sure NNSA understands DoD requirements and requests the necessary funding to meet those requirements.

NNSA 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 the Commission on the National Defense Strategy, and the Commission on the 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 sufficiently evaluate the defense budget's needs. If confirmed, I will work with DOE colleagues, my federal counterparts, and additional stakeholders to request the necessary funding 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 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 adequacy of the NNSA budget must be measured by evaluating how effectively the NNSA's strategy documents are being implemented to meet statutory obligations and accomplish the Administration's policies. If confirmed, I will work with my NNSA colleagues, federal counterparts, and additional stakeholders to determine the appropriate resource levels required for the NNSA budget to fulfill its statutory responsibilities and accomplish the administration's policy goals.

<u>Nuclear Policy and Modernization</u>

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, I do. Since the end of World War II, our nuclear stockpile has served as the bedrock of our nation's defense. If confirmed, I look forward to coordinating with NNSA's counterparts in DoD to ensure we 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 commit my support for both the modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, including SLCM-N, as well as the 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, the challenges posed by cooperation among our adversaries, the potential for opportunistic aggression, and the real challenge of deterring and, if necessary, winning simultaneous conflicts in Europe and the Indo-Pacific. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the work NNSA may have implemented so far in response to these threats and the work that remains to be done to leverage 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: I understand the global security environment has become more complex in recent years. NNSA, along with its national laboratories, is uniquely capable of applying technical nuclear weapons program expertise to assess foreign nuclear weapons programs. If confirmed, I will seek the appropriate briefings on nuclear threats to focus NNSA's efforts on deterring and countering those that threaten 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: Every element of the NNSA mission enables and ensures the United States' ability to strategically compete with our adversaries. NNSA's sustainment and modernization of our nuclear arsenal is the backbone of our national defense, ensuring the United States fields modern, reliable, and effective weapons to deter our adversaries. Recapitalization of the production enterprise demonstrates the United States' commitment to the nuclear mission over the long term and sends a signal to the rest of the world that the United States is able, and willing, to strategically address changes to the geopolitical environment by fielding modern capabilities. This also helps to dissuade adversaries from believing they can outpace our nation in the nuclear domain.

NNSA's nonproliferation mission also helps ensure threats to the United States are minimized and, when applicable, nuclear agreements are verifiable to deter negotiating partners from abrogating them. NNSA's counterterrorism and counter-proliferation efforts ensure the spread of nuclear weapons will not occur without notice and that nuclear use cannot occur with impunity and non-attribution. The Naval Nuclear Propulsion mission is essential to advancing the United States' ability to project power globally. Collectively, NNSA's capabilities help underpin national security efforts to allow the United States to deter, compete, and project strength globally.

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

Response: Yes. The United Kingdom's independent nuclear deterrent plays an immense role in providing a nuclear umbrella to our NATO allies and, equally as important, acts to complicate adversarial military calculus. If confirmed, I would continue to support and advocate for our collaboration with the United Kingdom.

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 the Secretary of Energy and the Administrator for Nuclear Security are 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 take an active role to ensure NNSA's capabilities and requirements are communicated and understood as part of this process. NNSA has unique responsibilities to deliver a deterrent that remains safe, secure, and effective for America.

If confirmed, what changes, if any, 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 potential deliberations that may be occurring regarding a future NPR. However, I will make sure NNSA executes the policy decisions outlined in any update. Given the complex challenges and strategic environment we face today, I believe that modernizing infrastructure across the enterprise, delivering capabilities to DoD, advancing future capabilities through research and development and restoring the domestic production of strategic materials will be enduring priorities for NNSA.

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 work with interagency partners to contribute to appropriate future arms control initiatives when feasible. In the meantime, I will ensure that NNSA's nuclear security enterprise is investing in the development, testing, and evaluation of monitoring and verification tools and concepts so that the United States can enter future arms control negotiations with confidence that we possess the necessary technologies and approaches for possible future monitoring and verification requirements.

Nuclear Weapons Council

By statute, the Administrator for Nuclear Security is a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council. In your view, what are the most significant issues the Council should take up in the coming years?

Response: While I am not privy to the internal deliberations of the NWC, I do believe that the NWC should take a strategic approach to prioritizing the execution of the existing Program of Record, which has been called necessary but insufficient, while identifying opportunities to accelerate or augment capabilities beyond those planned modernization programs. Successfully accomplishing these efforts and meeting DoD needs while limiting schedule delays and cost increases for infrastructure, warhead, and platform modernization will require NWC focus and prioritization. If confirmed, I look forward to collaborating with my fellow DoD colleagues through the NWC to continue pursuing the full-scale recapitalization of the enterprise while simultaneously executing necessary warhead modernization programs.

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 DoD and the NWC and will streamline communication between DoD and NNSA. If confirmed, I look forward to discussions with DoD colleagues about how they are implementing this restructuring.

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. The United States continues to observe its 1992 nuclear test moratorium; and, since 1992, has assessed that the deployed nuclear stockpile remains safe, secure, and effective without nuclear explosive testing. Each year, the national security lab directors and the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command assess the stockpile and determine if there is anything that would require a need to return to underground nuclear explosive testing. If confirmed, I will continue to support the annual assessment process and will ensure NNSA continues to comply with these readiness requirements while also supporting a robust Stockpile Stewardship Program.

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's primary focus remains delivering modernized warheads to DoD, 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. Its successful delivery 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 planned through the 2030s, deterrence does not stop on any particular date. NNSA must continue to be responsive to DoD requirements while developing capabilities to meet deterrent gaps of any kind 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, I will work closely with NNSA's laboratories, plants, and sites to ensure that NNSA and the nuclear security enterprise are able to deliver these critical programs on time and on budget. Though the work required of NNSA may seem daunting, I am encouraged by improved collaboration between NNSA's labs, plants, and sites in recent years that has resulted in tangible progress in delivering modernized weapons and recapitalized infrastructure. If confirmed, I look forward to accelerating 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: The unique capabilities of the Stockpile Responsiveness Program (SRP) allow it to advance important technology and prototype systems with new capabilities that will be required to allow the United States to appropriately respond to future threats, technology trends, and international developments not addressed by existing programs. If confirmed, I will fully support, and request funding for, SRP to exercise and develop the nuclear security enterprise's ability to respond to emerging threats and to ensure DOE/NNSA can recruit, train, and retain the next generation of weapon designers and engineers, and to improve integration across the complex to prepare for future demands.

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

Response: The National Ignition Facility 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 of the National Ignition Facility.

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: Artificial intelligence will increasingly become an indispensable tool for NNSA. Alongside supercomputers, new AI-based workflows coupled with machine learning can address emerging challenges, including 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 NNSA's mission space, whether in support of the stockpile or addressing nonproliferation, counterproliferation, and infrastructure challenges.

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: 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 have potential to optimize experimental designs, analyze diagnostic data and improve facility operations.

Additionally, 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. I would, if confirmed, 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: One of the principal responsibilities of the NNSA Administrator is to ensure integration of efforts across NNSA laboratories, plants, and sites, including the application of advanced technology, and to integrate these efforts with DoD where needed. If confirmed, I will make this a key priority.

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

Response: Yes. NNSA's labs, plants and sites, in tandem with private industry, provide cutting-edge, world class scientific and manufacturing capabilities and engagement. If confirmed, I will evaluate partnerships in the private sector for continued preeminence in critical fields related to the security of the nuclear stockpile.

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

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to NNSA's engagements with industry

partners, but I understand that NNSA routinely engages industry partners on its contracting opportunities through industry days, pre-proposal conferences, individual meetings and requests for information on various requirements. If confirmed, I commit to implementing suggestions from industry partners, when possible, as well as implementing lessons learned from contract competitions.

Construction and Project Management

NNSA has been plagued by cost overruns, schedule delays, and project cancellations related to the construction of nuclear facilities, including the Uranium Processing Facility, the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility, and the High Explosive Synthesis, Formulation, and Production Facility.

In your opinion, what are the primary causes of these repeated failures in project management?

Response: In the past, NNSA projects have failed due to ill-defined requirements, deficiencies in contractor performance and planning, inefficient oversight by Department personnel, procurement delays, inadequate accountability for contractors, and contract structures that insufficiently incentivized contractor performance. In addition, I understand NNSA has been negatively impacted by COVID-19 and inflation issues that have hit the entirety of the construction industry. If confirmed, I will work to adopt business best practices to support the completion of projects to meet the needs of the nation.

In your view, are the changes in NNSA project management practices undertaken over the last few years sufficient to address these problems?

Response: Over the past few years, NNSA has made continued improvements to address project management challenges, but more work in this area is required. If confirmed, I will be looking for areas where we can adopt innovative strategies to more efficiently deliver NNSA's mission, such as the streamlining of project management requirements.

If not, what additional steps would you take, if confirmed, to improve the availability of highly qualified talent capable of managing intensive capital infrastructure projects?

Response: Attracting talented professionals to manage these challenging infrastructure projects is foundational to the success of the enterprise. If confirmed, I will ensure NNSA hiring requirements for these positions value commercial experience equivalent to federal experience to attract highly qualified talent. I will also focus on building high performing teams in areas requiring the most attention in collaboration with the labs, plants and sites.

If confirmed, what specific steps would you take to ensure that these project management failures are not repeated in the future?

Response: If confirmed, some of my recommendations include holding those responsible for the project accountable, codifying the optimal level of oversight, taking decisive action when necessary, implementing lessons learned, strengthening cost estimating practices, and identifying opportunities for acceleration.

What specific changed in policy, practice, organization, or regulation would you recommend in furtherance of this effort?

Response: If confirmed, I will review current efforts and processes to ensure that my team continues to refine policy for consistent approaches in cost estimating, eliminate redundant policies and apply more streamlined processes that govern acquisition and project efforts. I will focus on contract structure and incentives to drive performance.

In your view, does the Administrator for Nuclear Security need any additional authorities or flexibilities to address the root causes of these project management failures? Please explain your answer.

Response: My understanding is that NNSA follows DOE Order 413.3B which governs program and project management for the acquisition of capital assets. I agree that rigorous project management principles are important. I support Energy Secretary Wright's recent memorandum which focuses on strengthening national laboratory efficiency and mission execution. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on its detailed application to NNSA's critical infrastructure mission activities and whether more changes are warranted.

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).

In your view, is CEPE sufficiently staffed to effectively provide the Administrator for Nuclear Security with costing and project management advice on the variety of projects within NNSA?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to NNSA's staffing details. If confirmed, I am aware that 50 USC 2411 details the CEPE Director's responsibilities, and under that statute I would be responsible for "…ensur[ing] that the Director has sufficient personnel who have competence in technical matters, budgetary matters, cost estimation, technology readiness analysis, and other appropriate matters to carry out the functions required by this" statute.

Does CEPE have sufficient authority and access to DOE data and information to serve its statutory purpose?

Response: I value the importance of data and information in performing NNSA's statutory mission. If confirmed, I will require accurate cost estimates and analyses to

inform my decisions at NNSA, and I understand that this important work also informs the NWC and Congress. In my current capacity, I am not privy to their specific data sources. I will review whether CEPE has sufficient authority and access.

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?

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, their independent analyses and reviews will inform my decision making. I will foster a solid working relationship with the CEPE Director.

If confirmed, specifically how would you undertake to support and sustain CEPE capabilities and independence?

Response: If confirmed, it would be important to me that CEPE's capabilities are supported and sustained. In my current capacity, I am not privy to all of the capabilities that CEPE possesses. If confirmed, I would endeavor to understand these unique and important capabilities as soon as possible. I commit to taking the actions needed to sustain these capabilities.

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: I have not yet been briefed on the projected demands of the U.S. nuclear deterrent, however, 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 DoD requirements. If confirmed, I pledge to work closely with NNSA and laboratory, plant, and site leadership to achieve full rate production and continue to explore opportunities to accelerate the production capacity required to support the nuclear deterrent.

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 understand the settlement agreement, which brought an end to the lawsuit challenging the National Environmental Protection Act work done in support of plutonium pit production was mutually agreed upon by NNSA/DOE 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 committed to ensuring enhanced public participation. If confirmed, I will review the status of SRPPF to ensure this will not pose a problem for pit production in general or SRPPF in particular.

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: I welcomed LANL, NNSA, and the nuclear security enterprise's achievement in producing the first war reserve plutonium pit for the W87-1 nuclear warhead last year. If confirmed, I will prioritize the rate production of plutonium pits at LANL and continue to explore opportunities to accelerate the production capacity required to support the nuclear deterrent.

SRPPF has been plagued by issues with design and construction since the decision was made to covert the partially completed Mixed Oxide Fabrication Facility to 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: I understand that SRPPF will establish the capability to produce no fewer than 50 War Reserve pits per year and that the facility will be 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 and NNSA's efforts to mitigate 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 recommendations include holding those responsible for the project accountable and identifying opportunities for acceleration. If confirmed, I will prioritize understanding NNSA's project management practices to ensure the project does not encounter past challenges.

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 pursue 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 unsure of 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. Noting that this

report is more than a decade old, if confirmed, I would also seek to confirm whether the views of the treaty's partners have evolved. I am committed to the nuclear deterrent, nonproliferation, and naval reactor missions, and if confirmed, 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 and this Administration to evaluate the previous determination.

Naval Reactors Program

The Director of Naval Reactors is the Deputy Administrator for Naval Reactors in the NNSA and is responsible for the design and testing of the Navy's power reactors, its fuel, dismantling and decommissioning power reactors and the inspection and storage of spent Naval Reactor Fuel. Like other elements of the NNSA, the Naval Reactor program is conducting large nuclear construction projects to replace aging fuel storage ponds and fuel examination hot cells. The program is also dependent on high flux Advanced Test Reactor at the Idaho National Laboratory and will require enriched uranium in the late 2040s timeframe.

If confirmed, will you commit to providing to this committee your assessment of the current and planned construction projects, utilization of the Advanced Test Reactor at present and in the future, as well as planning for the capability to enrich uranium fuel that meets the future fleet requirements?

Response: Yes, I will commit to working with Naval Reactors to provide updates on major construction recapitalization projects and maintaining the capabilities afforded by the Advanced Test Reactor (ATR). The ATR is critical to NR's national defense mission. DOE's Office of Nuclear Energy (NE) and Naval Reactors are continuing to evaluate various options to maintain thermal test reactor capability into the foreseeable future.

Additionally, if confirmed, I will work alongside Naval Reactors and in coordination with the DOE to ensure continued availability of enriched uranium to fuel the U.S. Navy's

nuclear fleet. It is my understanding that the Navy has sufficient enriched uranium to support Navy shipbuilding into the 2050s, and Naval Reactors is directly engaged with the DOE and NNSA on efforts to meet future enriched uranium requirements.

Fissile Materials Disposition

The United States and Russia committed to the disposition of 34 metric tons (MT) of weapons grade plutonium under the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (PMDA) in 2000. The original plan by the United States was to convert excess weapons grade plutonium to mixed oxide reactor fuel for civilian reactors at the Savannah River Site (SRS). After spending billions of dollars, and following Russia's withdrawal from the PMDA in 2016, this project was abandoned in favor of diluting the plutonium and disposing of it at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). The dilute and dispose process involves shipping the plutonium pits from Pantex to Los Alamos to be turned into oxide powder, then shipping then on to SRS for packaging, followed by final shipment to WIPP for disposal.

Do you believe the United States should continue to dispose of its stockpiles of weapons-grade plutonium even though Russia abrogated the PMDA?

Response: I believe it is important that NNSA continue its work to dispose of the excess plutonium necessary to meet the legal commitment to remove material from the State of South Carolina. At the same time, I support a review in coordination with interagency partners of the additional material that NNSA had planned to dispose of under the PMDA to determine whether continued adherence to the PMDA is still the right policy for the United States in light of Russia's purported withdrawal from the agreement.

What are your views on the dilute and disposal method?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the details of this program. I understand that dilute and dispose is NNSA's program of record for plutonium disposition, and I understand the rationale for this approach. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to learn the details of the program so that I can lead NNSA's plutonium disposition work effectively.

What are your views on permanent disposal at WIPP?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the details of this program. I understand that dilute and dispose is NNSA's program of record for plutonium disposition, and that this includes disposal at WIPP. I understand the rationale for this approach. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to learn the details of the program so that I can lead NNSA's plutonium disposition work effectively.

What are your views of the logistics of shipping plutonium between Pantex, Los Alamos, SRS, and WIPP? In your opinion, could this process be simplified by shipping the pits directly to SRS to be converted to oxide powder there?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to the details of this program. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to learn the details of the program so that I can lead NNSA's plutonium disposition work effectively.

What are your views on reprocessing as an alternative to dilution and disposal?

Response: I understand that NNSA moved from the MOX fuel approach to dilute and dispose based on compelling cost, schedule, and technical factors. Changing the plutonium disposition approach again could be costly and could make it difficult to meet NNSA's legal commitment to remove plutonium from the state of South Carolina. If confirmed, I commit to work closely with Congress on all aspects of the program, including listening to any views on alternative plutonium disposition approaches.

Nuclear Safety and Security

NNSA was created partially in response to security lapses at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Nonetheless, periodic security lapses have continued to occur, risking exposure of some of our nation's most closely guarded secrets.

To what extent have the conditions that allowed such lapses to occur been corrected, in your view?

Response: While I am not privy to the specifics of LANL's current security infrastructure, if confirmed, I will assess the current effectiveness of the security function and associated activities. Furthermore, I am committed to continuously improving the security of all NNSA labs, plants, and sites.

Section 3112 of the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act prohibits the Secretary of Energy or the Administrator for Nuclear Security, after April 15, 2025, from admitting citizens or agents of the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or the Islamic Republic of Iran to any national security laboratory, nuclear weapons production facility, or any site that supports the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program.

If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring full compliance with this provision across NNSA by the statutorily directed April 15, 2025, date for implementation?

Response: Yes.

In your view, are there further changes in policy, practice, management, or oversight to reduce the frequency of security issues at NNSA facilities that should be considered?

Response: Securing NNSA's facilities is critical to the agency's work. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with Congress to ensure the security of NNSA's labs, plants

and sites. There is no reason any of our nation's adversaries should have access to NNSA facilities, except where required by current or future treaty obligations.

Over the past several years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of unmanned aerial systems operating, both lawfully and unlawfully, in U.S. airspace domestically and over American military installations overseas.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure the NNSA appropriately prioritizes and resources detection and defeat capabilities for UAS that pose a threat to NNSA facilities and assets?

Response: NNSA must adopt capabilities to detect and defeat UAS that pose a threat to NNSA facilities and assets. If confirmed, I commit to learning the details of this program and taking necessary actions to improve NNSA's UAS detection and defeat capabilities. In addition, I will commit to continue working with partner agencies, to include DoD, State Department, DHS, FAA, and local law enforcement, to collaborate and share information about emerging threats and new CUAS technologies.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with Congress and the interagency to better clarify U.S. government roles and responsibilities for detecting, tracking, and if necessary, defeating, UAS within U.S. airspace?

Response: Yes.

The Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and NNSA's Office of Enterprise Assessments have periodically reported accidents at various Department of Energy facilities over recent years, including explosions, radiation exposure, and leakage of hazardous materials – putting both personnel and mission at risk. Yet, while personnel safety is critically important, the nuclear mission by definition involves some of the most hazardous materials on earth. Consequently, acceptance of a measure of risk is a prerequisite to accomplish NNSA's assigned missions.

How should we balance safety, risk, and mission at NNSA facilities?

Response: There are many risks and hazards associated with the production, handling, and disposal of nuclear materials. Intentional and constant monitoring of risks and the implementation of controls to mitigate those risks must be a priority. If confirmed, I will emphasize the continued importance of safety across the enterprise and always minimize safety risks while ensuring the success of accomplishing NNSA's important and urgent mission.

If confirmed, what steps would you recommend to improve the safety culture at the various NNSA labs and sites while still meeting mission requirements?

Response: I recognize that a positive safety culture is important for mission success. NNSA's national security mission requires sustained and strong safety performance to

ensure public trust. High safety achievement and mission success are mutually supportive and depend on proper risk assessment and control. Drawing on my experience as a nuclear Naval Officer, I understand that safety and mission success are not mutually exclusive. Conducting NNSA's operations safely is essential for guaranteeing successful execution. Safety is integral to the mission, and I will actively seek opportunities to continuously improve safety practices across the nuclear security enterprise while ensuring NNSA is delivering on its commitments to modernization and the programs of record.

Cybersecurity

What do you see as the primary cyber policy challenges for the NNSA and what suggestions do you have for addressing them?

Response: Technology moves faster than cybersecurity policy. If confirmed, I will ensure that NNSA continues to improve cybersecurity policies for information technology and operational technology systems to meet mission requirements.

Do you believe that the NNSA's current capabilities, policies, and authorities allow for effective cybersecurity? If not, what steps should NNSA and the Department of Energy take to address any shortfalls?

Response: If confirmed, I will review NNSA cybersecurity capabilities and authorities and make necessary adjustments.

What do you conclude from the recent cyber-attacks breaches on telecommunications infrastructure involving Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon about the state of our cyber defenses?

Response: These events highlight the vulnerability of critical infrastructure to cyberattacks. Our nation, including NNSA, must continue to improve cybersecurity across public and private sectors.

If confirmed, what specific measures would you take to improve cybersecurity culture across the NNSA workforce?

Response: If confirmed, I will review the current state of the cybersecurity workforce and, if needed, will develop plans to improve the culture.

How would you empower and hold key leaders accountable for improvements in NNSA cybersecurity?

Response: I have not been briefed on the cybersecurity practices or policies of the NNSA. However, I have experience in many aspects of cybersecurity from my business career. If confirmed, I will ensure NNSA's organizational structure empowers and holds key leaders accountable for implementing cybersecurity practices and measures.

If confirmed, what how do you plan to work with the Department of Defense and other agencies in the coordination of cyber security initiatives?

Response: I understand that NNSA regularly engages with defense, intelligence, and law enforcement agencies to identify interagency needs and opportunities for securing, accessing, sharing, and leveraging data. If confirmed, I commit to taking action to reduce barriers that NNSA may face in meeting its commitments to interagency partners.

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 commit to ensuring safe operations across the nuclear security enterprise, to include protection of the workforce, the public, and the environment in a way that is supportive of mission execution. I am aware and supportive of Energy Secretary Wright's recently announced actions 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: If confirmed, I will support DOE/NNSA's initiatives to streamline regulations, standardize performance expectations, and implement a common-sense approach to the interpretation and application of requirements to achieve enterprise-wide efficiency, innovation, and modernization. Additionally, I will work with Energy Secretary Wright to seek out and deliver these innovations for all of DOE to use. While I am not privy to the implementation of regulations across the enterprise, I understand that overly strict interpretations of and approaches to regulatory requirements can lead to inefficiencies. 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: Due to the hazardous nature of the work NNSA performs, it is essential to have the appropriate level of oversight; however, it is important that oversight does not lead to risk avoidance that impairs the ability to achieve NNSA's essential national

security missions. NNSA is entrusted stewardship of taxpayer dollars which requires appropriate scrutiny, yet again, it is important that oversight does 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: My understanding is that NNSA follows DOE Order 413.3B which governs program and project management for the acquisition of capital assets. I understand it provides necessary rigor yet can be overly burdensome. I am committed to working with Energy Secretary Wright to ensure important work can be executed in a timely manner under the order. If confirmed, I will work with our stakeholders to address and identify solutions to inefficiencies that may result from existing oversight processes.

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

Response: While I am not privy to all NNSA's regulatory and oversight structures, if confirmed, I will seek opportunities to improve efficiencies, including by reforming regulatory requirements where feasible and desirable.

Nonproliferation

What do you perceive as the highest priorities of the nuclear nonproliferation programs at NNSA?

Response: The first priority is addressing the threats posed by the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs. If confirmed, I will help implement the maximum pressure campaign in Iran and provide unique technical capabilities that could be used to negotiate, implement, and verify any potential future agreement for dismantlement of these countries' nuclear weapons programs. The second is accelerating detection of nuclear proliferation, especially in areas where adversaries seek to deny us access. Emerging threats, such as adversarial use of the space domain and malicious uses of artificial intelligence, must be detected and characterized early. This requires rapid, on-demand deployment of flexible systems using innovative technologies. If confirmed, I will leverage NNSA's world-leading technical capabilities to enhance its ability to detect these threats, so that the United States can respond promptly and keep the threat of nuclear weapons as far from the homeland as possible. The third is supporting responsible civil nuclear power development and deployment, especially to "nuclear newcomer" countries. We must ensure that nuclear power expansion is safe, secure, and peaceful, and has appropriate emergency response frameworks in place. If confirmed, I will leverage the unique expertise of NNSA's national laboratories to help U.S. companies design nuclear reactors that are more physically secure and easier to safeguard, which will reduce proliferation risks while also providing a commercial

advantage to U.S. companies. I will also encourage NNSA programs to further partner with the countries embarking on nuclear power through emergency response efforts. This will effectively strengthen U.S. partnerships proactively with these countries in radiological and nuclear safety and security.

What challenges does the emerging multilateral nuclear competition between the U.S., China, Russia, and North Korea pose to existing nonproliferation efforts?

Response: If confirmed, I am committed to protecting America from the threat of nuclear proliferation, even in a competitive global environment. This multidimensional nuclear competition poses a significant challenge for existing nuclear nonproliferation efforts. Under these circumstances, any potential arms control efforts are more complex, and it is more difficult to respond to the threat from countries like Iran and North Korea and to reach agreement on measures to strengthen the global nuclear nonproliferation architecture. However, NNSA has deep experience and a proven track record in advancing U.S. nuclear nonproliferation goals, even in challenging circumstances.

Do you believe additional cooperative nonproliferation efforts are feasible in light of China, Russia, and North Korea's burgeoning cooperation on nuclear technologies and materials?

Response: Launching new cooperative nuclear nonproliferation efforts is certainly challenging in the current global environment. However, as I said, NNSA and its predecessor organizations have overcome challenges like this before. Indeed, the foundation of the global nuclear nonproliferation regime, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, entered into force during the height of the Cold War. Progress is possible, even under challenging circumstances. For example, President Trump's pursuit of peace in Ukraine could open new opportunities for cooperative nonproliferation efforts. If confirmed, I am committed to taking a clear-eyed view of any new cooperative nonproliferation opportunities and to vigorously pursue initiatives that will make America stronger and safer.

If confirmed, what would be your nonproliferation R&D priorities?

Response: NNSA should prioritize nonproliferation research and development (R&D) that directly contributes to the Nation's security by developing and improving U.S. capabilities to detect and characterize global nuclear security threats. NNSA must also prioritize R&D that sustains and develops foundational nonproliferation technical competencies at the national laboratories to ensure the technical agility needed to support a broad spectrum of U.S. nonproliferation missions and anticipated threats. If confirmed, I will prioritize work in these areas.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to improve coordination across the NNSA on nonproliferation R&D and reduce duplicative efforts?

Response: I am not familiar with the details of NNSA offices performing nonproliferation

R&D, but commit to looking into any duplicative efforts and streamlining the efforts to remove duplication.

Emergency Response

What is your understanding of the NNSA's roles and responsibilities with regard to responding to domestic and international radiological events?

Response: NNSA is responsible for sustaining and, as necessary, employing the Nuclear Emergency Support Team (NEST) to respond to radiological and nuclear emergencies of any type and scale, globally. NNSA also has a significant role in the international arena as a leader in nuclear and radiological emergency response, including as a party to the IAEA's Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, which sets out an international framework for cooperation to facilitate prompt assistance in the event of nuclear accidents or radiological emergencies. In addition, where American national security, public health and safety, and economic interests are at stake, NNSA may also embark on providing direct bilateral or multilateral assistance to international partners to respond to nuclear or radiological emergencies that arise. NNSA forensics capabilities can support law enforcement investigations and attribution internationally. Domestically, NNSA has responsibility for the Department's Emergency Operation Center and 24/7 Watch Office.This includes providing watch and warning, situational awareness, and decision support capabilities for both domestic and international incidents, to include radiological events.

Do you believe NNSA is adequately resourced and staffed to fulfill its existing emergency response responsibilities?

Response: In my current capacity, I am not privy to specific data about emergency response staffing and resources, but domestic and international emergency response are critical components of NNSA's mission. If confirmed, I look forward to evaluating the teams and Administration resources that perform this important work.

In your view, how would you characterize the allocation of roles and responsibilities across the interagency, particularly with regard to the DOD and the Department of Homeland Security?

Response: NNSA maintains robust engagement with interagency partners, particularly DoD and DHS, on international and domestic, respectively, nuclear and radiological emergency response. If confirmed, I commit to engaging with my counterparts to ensure a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities. Ultimately, my goal would be to implement efficiencies and optimize NNSA's operational readiness by streamlining response roles and reducing unnecessary federal bureaucracy and redundant interagency oversight. NNSA's unique scientific expertise – defined by seventy years of expertise on nuclear fuel cycle and weapons development – is essential to U.S. nuclear and radiological response processes. NNSA ensures the United States is prepared to prevent, counter, and respond to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) crises. NNSA's unmatched

technical expertise and response capabilities keep America safe, secure, and prosperous. From public health and safety to countering nuclear terrorism, these capabilities are integral to the U.S. WMD nuclear and radiological emergency response. NNSA and its national laboratories are uniquely capable of applying technical nuclear weapons program expertise to assess foreign nuclear weapons programs.

If confirmed, are there any adjustments to the allocation of interagency responsibilities you would expect to recommend or pursue?

Response: It is my understanding that the NNSA brings technical expertise and technical resources that are unique in our country if not the world. If confirmed, I will make every effort to streamline emergency response processes and implement efficiencies to ensure that NNSA provides timely, actionable and credible support to federal, state and local partners during crises. I will also support NNSA's efforts to strengthen state and local response capabilities to enhance domestic resiliency.

Personnel Management

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

The most significant workforce challenges facing NNSA are recruitment and retention of highly skilled technical employees. 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 salaries with private sector jobs.

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 believe that mitigating the challenges of recruitment and retention requires that NNSA emphasize the unique benefits of public service, including emphasis on unique career paths.

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 NNSA depends primarily on the quality and motivation of its people. If confirmed, I look forward to strengthening NNSA's ability 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 facilitating a culture of accountability and performance.

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

Response: There is no question that talent management is a critical factor for NNSA's success. If confirmed, I would adopt a holistic approach to talent management, ensuring these efforts are aligned with agency goals. In my experience in the Navy and in the private sector giving employees clear objectives and frequent feedback results in better performance across an organization. Also, 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 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 assessing NNSA's current staffing levels and future needs. I am committed to ensuring that NNSA's urgent missions are properly resourced, including appropriate staffing.

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

Response: NNSA has a unique mission in all of government or in the American economy in general. And therefore it has a unique workforce to meet the needs of the NNSA mission. 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.

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

Response: I have not been briefed on the full extent of the NNSA Federal and M&O contractor capabilities. Based upon GAO, CRS, and Inspector General reports and hearing before the SASC committee, however, I suspect there are areas where either or both of the Federal and M&O contractor capabilities need to be enhanced or created. For

example, these reports point to improved needs in project management as well as to emergent needs like artificial intelligence. I look forward, if confirmed, to rapidly assessing and addressing these issues at NNSA.

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

Response: I understand that NNSA works to retain critical nuclear weapons expertise through a combination of strategic workforce planning, training, recruitment, and performance management actions. If confirmed, in this competitive workforce environment, I will work strategically with both the NNSA federal and contractor workforce to foster and develop internal talent pipelines within each site and across the nuclear security enterprise in an effort to reduce attrition. I commit to supporting these initiatives to ensure that NNSA maintains the necessary talent pool to execute its mission. I also believe it is important for NNSA to continue to provide stability for the M&O contractor workforce through long term contracts. I will ensure that M&O contractors continue to have the wide range of flexibilities they currently have to offer market competitive pay and benefits to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel.

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's use of direct hire authority, pay supplements, and hiring incentives offers competitive compensation packages along with opportunities for professional growth. 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.

Sexual Harassment

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

Response: If confirmed, I will continue increasing awareness and emphasizing prevention and reporting of sexual harassment and sex discrimination at DOE and NNSA. To the extent there are sexual harassment and sex discrimination issues that are brought to my attention, I will take expeditious and appropriate action in consultation with the appropriate stakeholders in DOE and NNSA.

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 or contractor of the DOE or NNSA?

Response: I will not tolerate sexual harassment or discrimination among NNSA employees or among its contractor employees. I will ensure that complaints of this nature 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.

Relations with Congress

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

Response: The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) is responsible for the oversight and authorization of NNSA. SASC's support on nuclear security issues and NNSA governance has continually been strong and bipartisan. As a former member of the House of Representatives myself, I believe support from Congress and this Committee in particular is critical to enabling NNSA mission success. If confirmed, I commit to maintaining a strong relationship with the Committee built on trust and transparency.

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

Response: Communication and transparency are foundational to a productive relationship with Congress. If confirmed, I will ensure that NNSA maintains strong and open channels of communication with Congress.

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**.**

In much the same manner as the Combatant Commanders within the Department of Defense, the Administrator for Nuclear Security is required by Section 4716 of the Atomic Energy Defense Act (50 U.S.C. 2756) to annually submit a list of priorities that were insufficiently funded by that year's budget request by the President. While unfunded

requirements lists are invaluable tools in helping Congress understand executable funding opportunities, past Administrators have only sparingly fulfilled this requirement.

If confirmed, will you commit to fully complying with the statutory requirement to submit an annual unfunded priority list to Congress with the annual budget submission of the President?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to following the law, including Section 4716 of the Atomic Energy Defense Act (50 U.S.C. 2756).

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 without delay? 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, and their respective staffs 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.