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Maryland's Commissioner O'Donnell Testifies on Nuclear Waste Disposal Draft Legislation

WASHINGTON—Commissioner Anthony J. O'Donnell of Maryland testified today before the House of Representatives Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on Environment, which heard testimony on the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017. Representing the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, Commissioner O'Donnell provided important feedback on the draft discussion document.

Overall, NARUC supports the policy direction of the discussion draft and offered constructive changes that would create a more effective policy by commenting on issues such as the fate of the Yucca Mountain license, the Nuclear Waste Fund and oversight of the program.

Noting the “multibillion dollar investment already expended” by electricity ratepayers for Yucca Mountain, O'Donnell's testimony reflected NARUC's strong support of an “expeditious completion of the license review” by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. O'Donnell serves as the chair of NARUC's Subcommittee on Nuclear Issues—Waste Disposal.

His filed testimony also addressed a major issue for NARUC members—the funds and fees associated with the Nuclear Waste Fund. Since 1982, more than \$40 billion in payments and interest have been paid into the fund. The Association supports the draft language that specifies how the current funds in the NWF will be disbursed and the stipulation that “any fees collected going forward are immediately available to the Secretary for waste related activities without additional appropriations.”

NARUC also supports the idea of performing a cost-benefit analysis as a prerequisite for any interim storage facility.

“These provisions are necessary to ensure that the nation's policy on nuclear waste is redirected so that it can progress in a more positive direction,” said NARUC President Robert F. Powelson. “Too much time has passed and too much money from ratepayers has been expended, with nothing to show for it. NARUC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft legislation, which we hope will lead to a resolution of our nation's nuclear waste crisis.”

Although NARUC is still reviewing the draft legislation, O'Donnell noted that it represents “a very positive step forward to correct unanticipated, but serious, structure flaws in the nation's nuclear waste disposal policy framework.”

More information on NARUC's response is detailed in Commissioner O'Donnell's complete testimony, available at <http://bit.ly/ODonnellNuclearWaste>. The discussion draft of the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 2017 is available at <http://bit.ly/DraftNWP2017>.

About NARUC

NARUC is a non-profit organization founded in 1889 whose members include the governmental agencies that are engaged in the regulation of utilities and carriers in the fifty States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NARUC's member agencies regulate telecommunications, energy, and water utilities. NARUC represents the interests of State public utility commissions before the three branches of the Federal government.