

## WEAPONS COMPLEX

MORNING  
BRIEFING**■ No big DOE nuclear amendments allowed in 2023 spending bill as debate begins in full House**

With no major defense-nuclear amendments allowed on the floor, the full House appeared poised this week to approve fiscal year 2023 spending bills for Department of Energy nuclear weapons and waste programs that would meet the White House's request.

The full House of Representatives, where Democrats have a slim majority, started debate Tuesday on a package of six bills that include the energy and water appropriations act with DOE's budget.

The energy and water bill included about \$21 billion for nuclear weapons programs at the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), some \$7.9 billion for nuclear-weapons cleanup at DOE's Office of Environmental Management and nearly \$1.8 billion for civilian nuclear energy and waste programs at the Office of Nuclear Energy.

The proposed NNSA appropriation is about \$180 million short of the request but more than \$750 million higher than the 2021 appropriation. Most of the funding missing from the request is for maintenance across the nuclear security enterprise. Nearly all nuclear-weapon refurbishments and construction of the agency's proposed pair of plutonium pit production plants would receive the requested funding.

The NNSA part of the bill would also allow the agency to continue maintaining the B83 megaton-capable gravity bomb the Joe Biden administration wanted to cancel. Unlike the full House's National Defense Authorization Act, the appropriations package would not permit NNSA to continue work on the sea-launched, nuclear-tipped cruise missile the administration wanted to kill.

Meanwhile, the proposed environmental management budget is roughly even with both the administration's request and the 2021 appropriation. The House Appropriations Committee did not heed a last-minute request by the administration to increase liquid waste spending at the Hanford Site in Washington State at the expense of solid-waste cleanup there.

The Office of Nuclear Energy would be up about \$110 million compared with both the request and the 2021 appropriation. The bill would allow DOE to change the way it keeps track of its budget for nuclear-waste disposal, essentially by moving the money into the Integrated Waste Management Systems subprogram from the Nuclear Waste Disposal account.

Prior to the start of the floor debate Tuesday, Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.), one of Congress' leading progressive advocates for slowing nuclear-weapons spending, proposed an amendment to the bill that would have blocked the NNSA from using its 2023 appropriation to build a plutonium pit production factory in South Carolina.

The House Rules Committee, which in the lower chamber determines what is allowed on to the House floor, did not admit [Garamendi's amendment](#) to the debate.

Meanwhile, the Senate Appropriations Committee has said it will not publish its version of the 12 annual appropriations bills for 2023 until the end of July, which accounting for a month-long August recess would leave only about a month for Congress to reconcile the inevitable competing spending priorities in the House and Senate. The 2023 fiscal year begins Oct. 1.

**■ Duling to resign as president of BWXT's biggest business line**

Joel Duling will resign as president of BWT Technology's mainstay Nuclear Operations Group effective July 29, the company wrote in a regulatory filing dated Monday.

Duling informed the company of his decision on July 12, according to the 8-K filing with the Securities & Exchange Commission.

"Joel Duling is retiring from BWXT to pursue other interests, and we wish him well going forward," a BWX

Technologies (BWXT) spokesperson wrote Wednesday in an email. “We will announce his successor at a later date.”

Duling has been president of the Lynchburg, Va.-based Nuclear Operations Group, which handles the company’s bread-and-butter naval reactors work for nuclear warships and submarines, since June 2018, according to his LinkedIn profile. He previously spent four years as president of BWX Technologies’ (BWXT) Nuclear Fuel Services subsidiary, which manufactures uranium fuel for the U.S. nuclear Navy.

Prior to his career at BWXT’s big naval-business subsidiaries, Duling worked at the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn., when another BWXT subsidiary managed the property, and at the Idaho National Laboratory.

As a condition of leaving the company, Duling signed a one-year non-compete with BWXT that runs through July 18, 2023, according to [the 8-K filing](#). Duling was 59 years old when BWXT in March filed [its most recent proxy statement](#).

### ■ **CEO Tindal retiring from Pantex, Y-12 prime**

Bill Tindal retired as chief executive officer of Consolidated Nuclear Security, the Bechtel National-led management contractor for the National Nuclear Security Administration’s two main nuclear-weapons production sites, a company spokesperson confirmed Wednesday.

“We shared with employees yesterday that Bill has retired,” the spokesperson said.

Gene Sievers, site manager for Y-12 National Security Complex, is now the interim CEO, said the spokesperson, who declined to say why Tindal left the job. Consolidated Nuclear Security (CNS) will manage Y-12 and the Pantex Plant in Amarillo, Texas, until at least Sept. 30, 2024.

Colby Yeary, the chief operating officer and the next-highest-ranking person in the corporate hierarchy, will remain in his job, the spokesperson said.

Sievers, like Tindal, is based at Y-12 in Oak Ridge, Tenn., the National Nuclear Security Administration’s (NNSA) hub for uranium processing and nuclear-weapon secondary stage production. Yeary is based at the Pantex, NNSA’s main assembly-disassembly site for nuclear weapons undergoing routine maintenance and life-extensions.

Sievers has been at Y-12 since 2013, when a BWX Technologies subsidiary was managing. Prior to that, he had a 27-year career in the nuclear Navy as a submarine officer.

After seeming like a lock to lose the combined management contract it started work on in 2014, CNS will be on the job at the Y-12 and Pantex until at least Sept. 30, 2024 and possibly until Sept. 30, 2025. CNS might even manage Y-12 until Sept. 30, 2027, under options the NNSA added to the existing prime contract earlier this year [after scrapping a controversial and allegedly tainted follow-on competition](#) that resulted in an award to a Fluor-Amentum partnership.

### ■ **Senate EPW postpones vote on Caputo, Crowell NRC noms**

A Senate committee had to delay its plan to vote this week on the White House’s picks to fill two open seats on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the panel announced Tuesday.

Although the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee was scheduled Wednesday to consider Annie Caputo and Bradley Crowell for roles as two of NRC’s top regulators, the decision “will be rescheduled for a later date,” the committee [said in a Tweet Tuesday](#). According to an aide, the panel’s work was postponed in anticipation of scheduled remarks to Congress from the first lady of Ukraine.

As of Wednesday morning, the vote had yet to be rescheduled, but an aide told *Exchange Monitor* Tuesday that the committee was looking to set a new date as soon as possible.

If the NRC nominees clear the Senate’s environment panel, they would next face a vote in the full chamber.

If confirmed, Caputo, who served as an NRC commissioner as recently as June 2021, and Crowell, director of Nevada’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources since 2016, would fill out the five-member commission. NRC leadership has been operating with three members, the minimum for quorum, since Caputo’s departure.

Nominated by President Joe Biden in May, Caputo and Crowell [faced down the Senate environment panel in early June](#), where Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) implored the nominees to take clear positions on NRC’s proposed decommissioning rule, of which the senator has been pointedly critical.

Markey asked Caputo, a Republican, and Crowell, a Democrat, whether they thought the decommissioning rule should require NRC to consider public input when approving post-shutdown decommissioning activities reports from nuclear plant operators.

Crowell told the senator that he agreed with the concept “in general,” and Caputo said she was “hesitant to comment,” because she left NRC just months before the commission approved the proposed rule on a 2-1 vote in November.

Despite a 50/50 party-line split in the Senate and its committees that can complicate controversial presidential nominations, Caputo and Crowell appeared to have the bipartisan support necessary to make it through the nomination process.

Environment and public works ranking member Sen. Shelley Capito (R-W.Va.) pledged during the June hearing to support both nominees.

NRC is currently led by chair Christopher Hanson, a Democrat. Also on the commission are Jeff Baran, a Democrat, and David Wright, a Republican. By law, NRC cannot have more than three members of the same political party.

### ■ **WIPP has big month during June, receiving 30 shipments**

The Department of Energy’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M., received 30 shipments of transuranic waste during June, making it one of the busiest disposal months since the COVID-19 pandemic reduced in-person operations at DOE nuclear sites in March 2020.

Of the 30 shipments last month recorded on a Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) [website](#), 21 came from the Idaho National Laboratory, seven from Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, one from the Oak Ridge Site in Tennessee and one from the Savannah River Site in South Carolina.

Last month’s figure of 30 is more than the 26 that arrived at the underground salt mine for disposal in June 2021. Since January, WIPP has received 97 shipments, narrowly eclipsing the 96 during the first half of 2021, according to the website.

Looking over the 2022 fiscal year, which started Oct. 1, 2021, WIPP has received 158 shipments through the first three-quarters of the fiscal year. That figure is up from the 146 taken in during the first nine months of the 2021 fiscal year.

WIPP went offline about three years after a February 2014 underground radiation leak that contaminated parts of the underground and the disposal site has yet to come close to equaling the 700-to-800 annual shipments received in years before the accident, the DOE’s top boss in Carlsbad, N.M. recently [told a recent town hall gathering](#).

The DOE announced last week it has [selected a Bechtel National-led joint venture](#) to be the next manager of WIPP, to succeed Amentum-led Nuclear Waste Partnership.

### ■ **Masks come off again at Los Alamos; but wear mask to SRS board next week**

The Department of Energy’s Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico has lifted the indoor mask order it [reinstated](#) earlier this month, a DOE spokesperson said Tuesday.

That is thanks to the fact the COVID-19 community rate for Los Alamos County returned to “medium” on Friday July 15, after being “high” days earlier, the DOE spokesperson said by email. “In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), masks are no longer required indoors at the Laboratory,” the spokesperson said.

But the Citizens Advisory Board for DOE’s Savannah River Site in South Carolina, sent out an email Tuesday afternoon, saying anyone attending next week’s two-day advisory panel meeting in person should wear a mask.

“Due to increased COVID-19 community transmission rates, masks will be required at the July Full board meeting,” scheduled July 25-26 at the Doubletree Hilton Hotel in Augusta, Ga., according to the Savannah River email.

At least three counties around the Savannah River Site, Aiken and Barnwell in South Carolina and Richmond County, Ga., where Augusta is located, currently have “high” rates, according to the CDC dashboard.

The CDC calls for masking indoors when the community level is high, and the DOE ties its practices to the rates posted by CDC.

### ■ **United Kingdom looking to consent-based siting for underground waste**

Like the U.S. Department of Energy, the United Kingdom's Nuclear Decommissioning Authority is in the market for local communities open to hosting an underground disposal facility for radioactive waste.

"Our mission goes beyond existing sites," David Peattie, CEO of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) said in a recent [annual report for 2021-2022](#). The NDA is chiefly responsible for remediating 17 nuclear sites, including the United Kingdom's first nuclear power stations.

"We're also responsible for identifying a suitable site and a willing host community for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF)," the chief executive said in the report published this month.

Four communities are being considered "and a significant amount of technical work and stakeholder engagement is underway," Peattie said in the 250-page document.

"It will take years of detailed assessments before a final siting decision is taken, with the latest planning assumption that the GDF will be available for ILW [intermediate-level waste] from around 2050-2060 and high level waste and spent fuel from 2075," Peattie added.

The NDA formed geologic disposal working groups in 2021, with provisions to provide financial incentives to communities willing to host an underground waste site. The incentive would amount to £2.5 million, roughly equivalent to U.S. \$3 million per year "if site investigations progress to the point of deep borehole drilling," according to the report.

The NDA hopes construction of an underground disposal facility can start as early as 2035 and be completed around 2045, according to the report. "Safe interim storage of wastes at Sellafield" and other nuclear sites will continue until such time that waste transfers are made to the Geological Disposal Facility, according to the report.

Last July, NDA became the owner of the UK's Low Level Waste Repository in west Cumbria, "providing safe, permanent disposal for a range of radioactive wastes," according to the report.

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