

**BRIGHTBILL, PIERCE, PROCHASKA,
AND MAMULA NOMINATIONS**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

TO

CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF JONATHAN BRIGHTBILL TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, TINA PIERCE TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, CONNER PROCHASKA TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY-ENERGY, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, AND NED MAMULA TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

MAY 14, 2025



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CONTENTS

OPENING STATEMENTS

	Page
Lee, Hon. Mike, Chairman and a U.S. Senator from Utah	1
Heinrich, Hon. Martin, Ranking Member and a U.S. Senator from New Mexico	4

WITNESSES

Brightbill, Jonathan, nominated to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy	7
Pierce, Tina, nominated to be Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Energy	11
Prochaska, Conner, nominated to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy, Department of Energy	15
Mamula, Ned, nominated to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, De- partment of the Interior	19

ALPHABETICAL LISTING AND APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

American Conservation Coalition et al.:	
Letter for the Record	65
Brightbill, Jonathan:	
Opening Statement	7
Written Testimony	9
Responses to Questions for the Record	47
Heinrich, Hon. Martin:	
Opening Statement	4
King, Jr., Hon. Angus S.:	
Inside Climate News article entitled “USGS Water Data Centers May Soon Close, Threatening States’ Water Management” by Wyatt Myskow, published on April 29, 2025	37
Science.org article entitled “Trump Swings Budget Ax at USGS Biology Research” by Erik Stokstad, published on April 18, 2025	41
Lee, Hon. Mike:	
Opening Statement	1
Mamula, Ned:	
Opening Statement	19
Written Testimony	21
Responses to Questions for the Record	56
National Stone, Sand, and Gravel Association:	
Letter for the Record	67
Pierce, Tina:	
Opening Statement	11
Written Testimony	13
Responses to Questions for the Record	51
Prochaska, Conner:	
Opening Statement	15
Written Testimony	17
Responses to Questions for the Record	53

**BRIGHTBILL, PIERCE, PROCHASKA,
AND MAMULA NOMINATIONS**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2025

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in Room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Mike Lee, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH**

The CHAIRMAN. This is the seventh hearing for this Congress on this Committee, and we are going to hear testimony today from four distinguished Americans who have been nominated by President Trump for senior offices within our Committee's jurisdiction, one at the Department of the Interior and three at the Department of Energy. I am grateful to the President for sending us all of these nominees.

First, we will hear from Mr. Jonathan Brightbill. He has been nominated to be the General Counsel of the Department of Energy. The General Counsel is the chief legal officer of the Department, providing legal counsel and advice to the Secretary and other officers at the Department, as well as its many components, ensuring that the Department carries out its duties and responsibilities in accordance with the law. Attorneys from the General Counsel's Office represent the Department in various matters and work in partnership with attorneys in the Department of Justice to represent the Department of Energy whenever it ends up in court. The General Counsel's team also assists in drafting and reviewing legislation, regulations, and contracts, as well as upholding the Department's ethical obligations.

Mr. Brightbill is a partner at Winston and Strawn LLP, and happens to be the chair of the firm's environmental litigation and enforcement practice. From 2017 to 2021, he served in the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division, known as ENRD, successively as Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Principal Assistant Attorney General, and Acting Assistant Attorney General. Only in a department of lawyers can you have so many acronyms that themselves have their own familiar abbreviations, but it's one of the things that they are known for, in addition to having outstanding lawyers. In that role, he managed more than 425 attorneys, handling roughly 6,500 active matters, argued precedent-setting cases, and oversaw enforcement actions under

the Clean Air Act, CERCLA, and a number of other environmental statutes. Mr. Brightbill was previously a partner at Kirkland and Ellis, and clerked for Judge D. Brooks Smith on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. He holds a juris doctorate, magna cum laude, from Georgetown University Law Center and a bachelor of science, cum laude, in economics from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Second, we will hear from Ms. Tina Pierce, who has been nominated to serve as the Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Energy. The CFO ensures the effective management and financial integrity of Department of Energy programs, activities, and resources. She develops, implements, and monitors policies, procedures, and systems regarding budgets, appropriations, finance, and accounting. Ms. Pierce is currently the Deputy Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Defense, advising the Pentagon's CFO. She directs policy development, audit readiness, remediation, enterprise risk management, production of the DOD agency financial report, and oversees the DOD's internal control and payment integrity programs. She previously served as Chief of Financial Reporting and Compliance at the Defense Health Agency.

An Idaho native, she served as a Marine Corps officer, obtaining the rank of Captain. Between her military service and her return to federal service as a civilian in 2018, she held finance and accounting leadership positions in both the public and private sectors across the United States and Europe, with expertise spanning information technology, energy, education, and consulting, and was appointed to the Senior Executive Service in August 2020. Ms. Pierce earned a bachelor of science in accounting from the University of Utah and an M.B.A. from Colorado State University. She is a CPA and a Certified Defense Financial Manager Level 3. Her 22 military decorations include the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service. She is also a member of the Beta Gamma Sigma International Business Honor Society.

Third, we will hear from Mr. Conner Prochaska, who has been nominated to be the Director of the Advanced Research Energy Agency, also known as ARPA-E. ARPA-E enhances the economic and energy security mission, as well as the technological leadership of the United States through the development of advanced energy technologies. It serves as a launchpad for new companies and major industry advancements and was founded to preserve America's technological edge in this area. It is advancing state-of-the-art energy, science, and engineering, and finding new opportunities for the commercialization of advanced energy technologies.

Mr. Prochaska currently serves as Senior Advisor at the Department of Energy. He was previously DOE's Chief Commercialization Officer and Director of the Office of Technology Transitions (OTT), guiding all technology transfer and commercialization activities across DOE's 17 national laboratories, production sites, and research centers. He also served as Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor at ARPA-E, where he managed day-to-day operations and helped shape the agency's transformational research and development portfolio. Mr. Prochaska began his career as an intelligence officer

of the United States Navy, attaining the rank of Lieutenant while assigned to the Center for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction. His military decorations include the Joint Service Commendation Medal, Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, and a whole bunch of others. He has a very impressive background. He graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor of arts in political science, was elected student body president, and was inducted into the General O.R. Simpson Corps Honor Society. He later received his law degree from the Georgetown University Law School.

Finally today, we will hear from Dr. Ned Mamula, nominated by the Director of the U.S. Geological Survey within the Department of the Interior. Dr. Mamula has over 35 years' experience in the fields of energy and mineral exploration, production, and resource policy. He has experience in both the Federal Government and private industry, as well as academia, with critical and strategic minerals, oil, gas, shale, natural gas hydrates, coal, and uranium. During his long career, he has worked as Chief Geologist at GreenMet, a company focused on achieving mineral security, and owned and worked at Terra Dynamics Corporation. From 2019 to 2023, Dr. Mamula directed the Critical Mineral and Rare Earth program for Leonardo Technologies, on contract with the U.S. Department of Energy.

Dr. Mamula has considerable experience at the U.S. Geological Survey, the entity that he is now asked to lead by President Trump, having served the agency as a research geologist from 2007 to 2009 and earlier in his career from 1977 to 1987. He was only 12 years old at the time—a prodigy, I am told.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. He also served in the Central Intelligence Agency as a geoscientist and intelligence analyst from 2009 to 2015. At the CIA, Dr. Mamula received a Deputy Director of Intelligence Medal of Service in Afghanistan and multiple exceptional performance awards for superior accomplishments and valuable service. He also previously served as a geoscientist at the Department of Homeland Security, where he received a meritorious service award for providing intelligence support for U.S. Coast Guard and DHS operations and interagency coordination, as well as a commendation for meritorious service while fulfilling a broad spectrum of intelligence support missions. He also received the Assistant Commandant for Intelligence Performance Award.

A Pennsylvania native, Dr. Mamula received a bachelor of science in geology from Slippery Rock University in 1973 and later received a master of science in geosciences from Penn State University in 1980. Dr. Mamula also earned a Ph.D. in geosciences from Texas A&M University in 1986 and a master of international public policy and strategic resources from Johns Hopkins University in 2005.

All the nominees we will hear from today are well-qualified for the offices for which they have been nominated, and they represent exactly the type of bold leadership that America needs, uniquely, right now.

All right, we are almost to the point where we have a voting quorum present. I will ask now—the Ranking Member is correct. We don't yet have the votes we need.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. We are almost there.

I will ask Ranking Member Heinrich if he would like to make an opening statement.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARTIN HEINRICH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO**

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you, Chairman Lee, and welcome, Mr. Brightbill, Ms. Pierce, Mr. Prochaska, and Dr. Mamula.

Confirmation hearings enable Senators to advise and consent on presidential nominations. They also remind us of the great breadth and importance of the functions that we entrust to presidential appointees. The nominations before us this morning are no exceptions. Today, we have three nominees before us who have been nominated to important positions at the Department of Energy. I want to hear from today's nominees about how they plan to use their positions to do good for the American people. At the very minimum, that is what we should want, what we should demand from our public servants. That is not what we are seeing currently at DOE. In the last few days, DOE announced plans to cut dozens of energy efficiency rules that have saved consumers hundreds of dollars a year on their utility bills. The administration claims it is cutting red tape. Instead, we are seeing it stop real progress.

The President has nominated Mr. Brightbill to be General Counsel at the Department of Energy. The General Counsel is the chief lawyer for the Department. The Department's General Counsel must not only be a skilled advocate, but also a wise counselor. He is the keeper of the Agency's conscience, who ensures that the Department follows the law, upholds the Constitution, and protects the public interest.

The President has nominated Ms. Pierce to be the Department's Chief Financial Officer. The CFO is the guardian of the public's money within the Department, who ensures that it is properly obligated and disbursed as Congress has directed in the law.

The President has nominated Mr. Prochaska to be the Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency, or ARPA-E, as it is known here. ARPA-E is our investment in the future. Its mission is to overcome barriers to developing transformative science and technology solutions to our energy and environmental problems.

My colleagues are fond of talking about energy dominance. Dinosaurs were once dominant. Not so much today. We will not remain a great nation by clinging to the past. If we want to remain dominant, we must embrace the future and invest in it today. ARPA-E is our investment in the future scientific advances that will ensure our scientific and technological dominance into the 22nd century and beyond.

Finally, the President has nominated Dr. Mamula to lead the U.S. Geological Survey. The USGS is our nation's trusted source of data on natural hazards, weather, water, ecosystems, and our mineral wealth. It must remain non-partisan and independent, and the integrity of its science is essential for informed decision-making

across the government and industry alike. Dr. Mamula has stated he plans to shrink the agency's mission and has dismissed conservation efforts and public land withdrawals as a left-wing tool to block mining. Additionally, some of his past statements, particularly his accusation that hostile foreign entities fund domestic environmental lawsuits, raise questions about how he would uphold USGS's commitment to impartial science-based work. The USGS should not be turned into a vehicle for deregulation or industry favoritism. We need a director who will defend its core mission, not politicize it.

I look forward to hearing from each of our witnesses this morning and I appreciate their willingness to take on these important and challenging responsibilities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks so much, Senator Heinrich.

We will now proceed to the business meeting as part of today's hearing.

[RECESS]

The CHAIRMAN. All right, let's turn to the hearing today.

The world is in a race. It is a race for resources, for technological supremacy, and for control over the supply chains that power our daily lives. In this race, there are no consolation prizes. America will either lead or it will be led—led by powers that don't always share our interests or our values.

Unfortunately, we have seen and experienced, painfully, what happens when energy policy is driven by ideology rather than reality. Rolling blackouts, soaring prices, families struggling at the gas pump. American workers have been outsourced. Our mineral resources are locked away, with producers forced to jump through decades of procedural hoops, all while China tightens its grip on global supply chains. This is not the America we believe in. We believe in an America where our energy isn't hostage to foreign interests, where innovation is rewarded, and where workers lead the world—our workers. That is why we are here today. We are assembling a dream team, a roster of American patriots, who know the stakes are high and can outwork, outsmart, and outlast America's adversaries.

Each of these nominees will be responsible for critical roles in our energy future, overseeing the legal strategy of the Department of Energy, ensuring financial integrity across multibillion-dollar energy programs, driving groundbreaking research at ARPA-E, and securing our critical minerals through the U.S. Geological Survey. Their decisions will impact everything from keeping the lights on in American homes to unlocking the next generation of energy innovations. These are not ceremonial posts. These are positions of consequence.

We on this Committee are processing nominees more than three times faster than the last Congress. By the close of this hearing, we will have reported 16 critical energy leaders out of this Committee, compared to just four at this point in 2021. We know what is at stake, and that is why we are moving fast. And we are moving at a breakneck speed because America can't afford to wait, and our leadership on the world stage cannot be taken for granted. It must be earned, secured, and defended every single day. Our adversaries

are watching. They, of course, hope that we will fumble, that we turn inward, that we abandon the competitive edge that has made America the global leader. We won't give them that satisfaction. We must not. We will lead with strength, with resolve, and with an unshakable commitment to American energy dominance.

American energy dominance means American security, American jobs, and American leadership. It means no more pleading with global adversaries, no more dependency on unreliable supply chains, and no more surrendering our future to global competitors. America's energy future must be American-made. That means putting leaders in place who understand our resources are a strength, our workers are an asset, and our technology is unmatched. We have the resources. We have the talent. We have the will. Soon, we will have the team to reclaim our position as the global energy superpower.

Senator HEINRICH. Mr. Chair, I would say that the reality is that the Department of Energy is hobbling our energy leadership and this administration is sidelining the majority of our energy projects and killing jobs—for example, the Empire Wind Project, which was fully permitted—and raising energy costs on consumers. This is threatening our leadership, not only in the field of energy, but also in artificial intelligence. So I look forward to hearing from our nominees today on how they would manage these positions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Heinrich. I look forward to hearing from them as well, and having spent time with them, I am confident that each of them will serve our country very, very well.

Now, the rules of the Committee require that all nominees be sworn in connection with their testimony. So if you would all rise and raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony that you are about to provide to the Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Witness panel sworn.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

And then, we will have you begin your opening statements in a moment, but before we do that, I ask the witnesses three questions that are posed to all nominees appearing before this Committee.

First, will you be available to appear before this Committee and other congressional committees to represent departmental positions and respond to issues of concern to Congress?

[Witnesses respond, "yes."]

The CHAIRMAN. Second, are you aware of any personal holdings, investments, or interests that could constitute a conflict of interest or create the appearance of such conflict, should you be confirmed and assume the office to which you have been nominated by the President of the United States?

[Witnesses respond, "no."]

The CHAIRMAN. And third, are you involved in or do you have any assets in a blind trust?

[Witnesses respond, "no."]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We will note here for the record that each nominee responded in the affirmative to the first question and in the negative to the two subsequent questions.

Now, as I turn to the witnesses, we will have each of you speak for five minutes, starting with Mr. Brightbill and moving to my right—your left—in that order, and as you do so, I invite you, as you may prefer, to introduce any family members who may be here with you today.

We will start with you, Mr. Brightbill.

**STATEMENT OF JONATHAN BRIGHTBILL, NOMINATED TO BE
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

Mr. BRIGHTBILL. Thank you, Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and distinguished members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the Department of Energy. I am deeply grateful to President Trump and Secretary Wright for this nomination, recognizing that, under our Constitution, your advice and consent are essential for me to assume this position of trust. I look forward to today's hearing and any further discussions that may be needed, and I hope to earn your support.

I want to thank my family, who have supported me and tolerated the long hours and frequent absences that my work has required over the years. Thank you foremost to my wife, Nicole, who manages to balance everything in our family, in addition to her own demanding professional obligations. I want to recognize my children: Tamsin, finishing her junior year in high school, Chip, a freshman, and Davis, our fifth grader. Every day, these three blessings from God remind me of the greatness and the promise of America and inspire me to do what I do.

One of the most unexpectedly difficult questions I received during this process was to identify the state from which I hail. Having lived in Virginia for 20 years now, with my three children born and raised there, I responded, "the Commonwealth of Virginia." I somewhat regret having done so, because I was born and raised in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, and really consider myself, like Senator McCormick, a proud son of that other great commonwealth. With me today as well is the Honorable David Chip Brightbill, my father, and my stepmother, the Honorable Donna Long Brightbill, whose own dedication to public service in Pennsylvania inspired me to that same call here today.

With one senator and one judge already in the family, that left the only option open for me to maintain the Constitution's separation of powers was to pursue service in the executive branch. I also want to thank my mother, Carol, who is back home in Pennsylvania, though she couldn't be here today, as well as my brother Christian for coming down from Pittsburgh to help. I also want to thank Deputy Secretary Danly for his role in including me as part of the great team that he and Secretary Wright are assembling for the Department of Energy.

I ask for this Committee's support because I think I can help the Department of Energy and the country at this moment, when I think that there is a bipartisan consensus that the United States needs more energy to meet our challenges in the world. My training to help address these challenges began at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, where I concentrated on public policy and management. My first public service was as

an executive policy specialist for Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge at his Department of Environmental Protection. There, I traveled the state and learned so much about the energy industry so critical to the economy of that state and this country and first cut my teeth on the many public policy issues still impacting energy development.

After graduating magna cum laude from Georgetown University Law Center, I clerked on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit for the Honorable D. Brooks Smith. And for my first 15 years, I practiced law in D.C. here at Kirkland and Ellis before joining the Department of Justice in 2017. At the Environment and Natural Resources Division, I first had the privilege of working with the Department of Energy's General Counsel, including Bill Cooper, as well as many other officials, there, like Ted Garrish, Eric Fygi, and others, effectively in the role of outside counsel for the Department of Energy across a range of matters. DOJ was also my first opportunity to serve as a senior manager in government, where I helped lead ENRD's 425 lawyers and 600 employees, managing 6,500 active matters, cases, investigations, and the like, and a budget of \$150 million a year. Over the last four years, I have been privileged to be a partner at the law firm of Winston and Strawn, here in D.C., where my practice has continued to include many energy industry clients and matters across the range of energy technologies and across different areas of the energy sector.

If confirmed as General Counsel, it would be my privilege to assist President Trump and Secretary Wright in achieving their vision of American energy dominance. I would also look forward to working with this Committee and Congress and other stakeholders to undertake sound energy policy reforms to our laws, regulations, and programs, to advance the interests of the American people first, but ultimately through American greatness and leadership, to better all human lives.

Thank you all again for the honor to appear before you here today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brightbill follows:]

**Testimony of Jonathan Brightbill
Nominee for General Counsel
at the U.S. Department of Energy
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025**

Good morning, Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and distinguished members of the Committee:

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Energy. I am deeply grateful to President Trump and Energy Secretary Wright for this nomination, recognizing that, under our Constitution, your advice and consent are essential for me to assume this position of trust. I look forward to today's hearing and any further discussions that may be needed. I hope to earn your support.

I want to thank my family who have supported me and tolerated the long hours and frequent absences that my work has required over the years. Thank you foremost to my wife, Nicole, who manages to balance everything in our family, in addition to her own demanding professional obligations. I want to recognize my children, Tamsin (finishing her junior year of high school), Chip, a freshman, and Davis, our 5th grader. Every day, these three blessings from God remind me of the greatness and the promise of America and inspire me to do what I do.

One of the most unexpectedly difficult questions I received during this process was to identify the state from which I hail. Having lived in Virginia for almost 20 years now, and with my three children born and raised there, I responded with the Commonwealth of Virginia. I somewhat regret having done so, because I was born and raised in Lebanon County, PA and really consider myself — like Senator McCormick — a proud son of that other great Commonwealth. With me today is the Honorable David Chip Brightbill, my father, and my stepmother, the Honorable Donna Long Brightbill, whose own dedication to public service in Pennsylvania inspired me to that same call here today. With one Senator and one Judge already in the family, that left the only option open for me to maintain the Constitution's separation of powers was to pursue service in the executive branch. I also want to thank my mother, Carol, back home in Pennsylvania, though she could not be here today, as well as my brother Christian for coming down from Pittsburgh.

I ask for this Committee's support because I believe can help advance the Department of Energy's mission for the American people at this moment when there is a bipartisan consensus that the United States needs more energy to meet our challenges in the world.

My training to help address these challenges began at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, where I concentrated on public policy and management. My first public service was an Executive Policy Specialist for Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge at his Department of Environmental Protection. There, I traveled the state and learned so much about the energy industry so critical to the economy of that state and first cut my teeth on many public policy issues still impacting energy development in this country.

After graduating magna cum laude from Georgetown University Law Center, I clerked on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit for the Hon. D. Brooks Smith. For my first 15 years, I practiced law here in D.C. at Kirkland & Ellis, before joining the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2017.

At the Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD), I first had the privilege of working with Bill Cooper, Ted Garrish, and many fine members of the Energy Department's Office of General Counsel, effectively as outside counsel for the Department of Energy across a range of matters. DOJ was also my first opportunity to serve as a senior manager in government, where I helped lead ENRD's 425 lawyers and 600 employees, managing 6,500 active matters and a budget of \$150 million.

Over the last four years, I have been privileged to be a partner at Winston & Strawn, where my practice has continued to include many energy industry clients and matters.

If confirmed as General Counsel, it would be my privilege to assist President Trump and Secretary Wright in achieving their vision of American energy dominance. I would also look forward to working with this Committee and Congress, and other stakeholders, to undertake sound energy policy reforms to our laws, regulations, and programs, to advance the interests of the American people first, but ultimately through American greatness and leadership, to better all human lives.

Thank you all again for the honor to appear before you here today, and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Brightbill.
We will hear now from Ms. Pierce.

**STATEMENT OF TINA PIERCE, NOMINATED TO BE CHIEF
FINANCIAL OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY**

Ms. PIERCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Heinrich, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Energy.

Before I begin my official remarks, I would like to introduce the members of my family who have joined me here today: my husband of 26 years, Scott Pierce, who is a retired Marine Colonel, and someone who, at the age of 19, worked in the oil fields of Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and North Dakota; my stepdaughter Elisa, son Thomas, and daughter Isabel. I would also like to recognize my son Jackson, daughter-in-law Ellen, and my amazing parents, Robert and Judy Morgan, who are unable to be here today.

I am honored to be nominated by the President and humbled to be considered by the Senate for an office of such great trust and responsibility to the American people, and, if confirmed, to play a role in unleashing American energy dominance to better all human lives. Energy Secretary Wright asked me what I would consider success if I were to be nominated and confirmed as the Energy Department's CFO. My answer was simple—to provide the Secretary with timely and accurate financial information that allows him to make prudent, well-informed decisions so that we can legally and responsibly steward the taxpayer dollars that the Congress entrusts to us to advance America's energy interests.

I would like to share with you a little bit of the story that brought me here today. I grew up on a small farm in Rigby, Idaho. I am the first person in my family to earn a college degree. I studied accounting on a Naval ROTC scholarship at the University of Utah. Eager for challenge and discipline, I chose to serve in the United States Marines after graduation. The Marine Corps wisely put this round peg in a round hole, making me a financial management officer. I proudly led Marines in Hawaii and California and deployed to Kuwait as the comptroller for the contingency Operation Desert Thunder.

I left active duty, a month later exchanged wedding vows, and two days later, my husband Scott and I were on our way to his next assignment in the Netherlands. As the wife of a Marine infantry officer and a mom of three, every couple of years, I had to pack up our house and kids—often by myself—quit my job, and start over someplace new. And through it all, I was able to continue to pursue my professional passion—using accounting to drive business decisions.

In Europe, I worked as a financial manager in a multinational IT firm. In North Carolina, we experienced the shock of 9/11. My husband deployed to the Middle East, and I was called back to active duty. In Kansas, I earned an M.B.A. from Colorado State University, graduating at the top of my class, and staying on as a remote instructor, a job I could take with me. In the Sierra of eastern California, I commuted over an 8,000-foot mountain pass, with morning sickness and altitude sickness, to serve as a county deputy

controller, and in southern California, I worked in the energy sector as a senior financial analyst for a nuclear generation plant and a major public utility. I became and am a Certified Public Accountant.

When the Marine Corps brought us to Washington, DC, we decided it was time to give our children the stability that we had when we grew up, so we settled down. I started over as a junior contractor, reviewing Army pay records on a laptop at a crowded conference room table with 20 other analysts. I was soon recruited to work on the Air Force health services financial remediation team and then entered the federal workforce at the Defense Health Agency. My performance at DHA led to a senior executive position with the Department of the Air Force, overseeing financial operations and audit remediation. Since July of last year, I have served as the Deputy Chief Financial Officer at the Department of Defense, where we have made great strides in bringing the entire Department closer to a clean audit opinion.

If confirmed, I look forward to bringing my broad financial experience in both government and the private sector to the Department of Energy. If confirmed, I pledge that I will apply the highest standards of fiduciary responsibility for the funds entrusted by this Congress. I will do everything in my power to work with this Committee and Congress to facilitate the oversight required by our Constitution. And with that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pierce follows:]

**Testimony of Tina M. Pierce
Nominee for Chief Financial Officer
at the U.S. Department of Energy
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for Chief Financial Officer of the U.S. Department of Energy.

Before I begin my official remarks, I would like to introduce the members of my family who have joined me today: my husband of 26 years, Scott Pierce, who is a retired Marine Colonel, and someone who at 19 worked in the oil fields of Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and North Dakota. My stepdaughter Elisa, son Jackson, and daughter Isabel. I would also like to recognize my son Thomas, daughter-in-law Ellen, and my amazing parents Robert and Judy Morgan who are unable to be here today.

I am honored to be nominated by the President and humbled to be considered by the Senate for an office of such great trust and responsibility to the American people – and, if confirmed, to play a role in unleashing American energy dominance to better all human lives.

Energy Secretary Wright asked me what I would consider success if I were to be nominated and confirmed as the Energy Department's CFO. My answer was simple: To provide the Secretary with timely and accurate financial information that allows him to make prudent, well-informed decisions so that we can legally and responsibly steward the taxpayer dollars that the Congress entrusts to us to advance America's energy interests.

I would like to share with you a little bit of the story that brought me here today.

I grew up on a small farm near Rigby, Idaho. I am the first person in my family to earn a college degree. I studied accounting on a Naval ROTC scholarship at the University of Utah. Eager for challenge and discipline, I chose to serve in the United States Marines after graduation.

The Marine Corps wisely put this round peg in a round hole, making me a financial management officer. I proudly led Marines in Hawaii and California and deployed to Kuwait as the comptroller for the contingency Operation Desert Thunder.

I left active duty, a month later exchanged wedding vows, and two days later, my husband Scott and I were on our way to his next assignment in the Netherlands. As the wife of a Marine infantry officer and a mom of three, every couple of years, I had to pack up our house and kids – often by myself – quit my job and start over someplace new. But through it all, I was able to continue to pursue my professional passion—using accounting to drive business decisions.

In Europe, I worked as a financial manager in a multinational IT firm. In North Carolina, we experienced the shock of September 11, 2001. My husband deployed to the Middle East, and I was called back to active duty. In Kansas, I earned an MBA from Colorado State University,

graduating at the top of my class and staying on as a remote instructor, a job I could take with me. In the Sierra of eastern California, I commuted over an 8000-foot mountain pass, with morning sickness and altitude sickness, to serve as a county deputy controller, and in southern California, I worked in the energy sector as a senior financial analyst for a nuclear generation plant and a major public utility. I also became a Certified Public Accountant.

When the Marine Corps brought us to Washington, D.C., we decided it was time to give our children the stability that we had had when we grew up, so we settled down. I started over as a junior contractor, reviewing Army pay records on a laptop at a crowded conference room table with twenty other analysts. I was soon recruited to work on the Air Force health services financial remediation team and then entered the federal work force at the Defense Health Agency (DHA).

My performance at DHA led to a senior executive position with the Department of the Air Force, overseeing financial operations and audit remediation. Since July of last year, I have served as the Deputy Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Defense, where we have made great strides in bringing the entire Department closer to a clean audit opinion.

If confirmed, I look forward to bringing my broad financial experience in both government and the private sector to the Department of Energy. If confirmed, I pledge that I will apply the highest standards of fiduciary responsibility to the funds entrusted by this Congress. I will do everything in my power to work with this committee and Congress to facilitate the oversight required by our Constitution.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Pierce.
Mr. Prochaska.

STATEMENT OF CONNER PROCHASKA, NOMINATED TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY-ENERGY, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Mr. PROCHASKA. Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is an honor and a privilege to appear here today as President Trump's nominee to serve as Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency at the Department of Energy, or ARPA-E. I would like to thank President Trump and Secretary Wright for the confidence and trust that they have placed in me with this nomination.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce the most important people in my life—my family. Here today with me is the love of my life, who is the most amazing wife, mother, and true life partner I could ever imagine. Kate, I am in awe of your ability to balance a successful career and provide a loving home for our family. I love you and thank you. Also here today are my four-year-old son, Crawford, and my two-year-old daughter, Henley, whom you have already heard from. They are the light of my life, and my world spins around them, whether I want it to or not. I would also like to recognize my parents, who have joined us from Texas. They have protected, provided, and guided me throughout my life. Mom and Dad, the words “thank you” can never express the gratitude I have for the sacrifices you both made to raise me and my three amazing brothers, Frankie, Tate, and Joey, who are home with their families in Texas, watching. And I would like to thank the Honorable Paul Dabbar for attending and for all those who texted their support over the last few days for this effort. It means the world.

As an Eagle Scout from a patriotic family, I was instilled with a sense of service at a young age. The sense of service was further ingrained during my time at Texas A&M, where the core values of excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service are paramount, and I strive to live them every day. My love for the United States led me to be commissioned in the United States Navy, where I saw firsthand the devastating effects of energy scarcity. The Navy was also where I was first acquainted with the DOE, through the nuclear weapons program as a Counter-Weapons of Mass Destruction Intelligence Officer. Following law school, I was honored to serve in President Trump's first term as ARPA-E's Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor, ushering in many of the programs and projects that exist today at ARPA-E, including the first nuclear technology projects.

After my time at ARPA-E, I was privileged to be selected as the Department's first Chief Commercialization Officer and also the Director of the Office of Technology Transitions. In this role, I worked closely with this Committee and staff on ushering DOE technology out of labs and into the daily lives of Americans, maximizing their impact, from Augusta to Albuquerque to Anchorage. Following my time at DOE, I continued my career in emerging technologies, as I helped co-found a quantum technology company spun out of Caltech.

If confirmed, it will be a true humbling honor to lead the talented, innovative, and dedicated team at ARPA-E. When I left ARPA-E to become the Department's Chief Commercialization Officer, I told the staff that the fact that my name would be associated with theirs and the organization was one of the proudest accomplishments of my professional career, and I feel the same today. As members of this Committee and staff are well aware, energy and critical technologies are at an inflection point. Quantum, artificial intelligence, fusion, small modular reactors, geothermal—the list can go on, but these technologies will fundamentally change how the country and the world consume and produce energy. The Department of Energy's role in advancing these technologies through our work with our national labs, industry partners, and the university ecosystem has never been more critical. ARPA-E is uniquely positioned to lead high-risk, high-reward research, leading to technological developments that will better human lives throughout the United States and across the globe.

The Trump Administration's forward-leaning approach to innovation and technology will require an interagency effort to ensure the United States continues to spearhead energy and critical and emerging technologies around the world. ARPA-E's unique authorities and structure will allow for flexibility and nimble action to address these challenges in a timely and effective manner.

If confirmed, I intend to work closely with this Committee and Congress to effectively and efficiently lead ARPA-E and its talented and dedicated staff, who I consider the elite of the energy research community, to help drive innovation, maintain American leadership in critical technology areas, and unleash American dominance.

Chairman, under Secretary Wright's leadership, we will not fumble.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Prochaska follows:]

Testimony of Conner Prochaska
Nominee for Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy
at the U.S. Department of Energy
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025

Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and distinguished members of the Committee: It is an honor and privilege to appear here today as President Trump's nominee to serve as Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) at the U.S. Department of Energy. I would like to thank President Trump and Energy Secretary Wright for the confidence and trust they have placed in me with this nomination.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize and introduce the most important people in my life: my family. Here with me today is my 4-year-old son Crawford and almost 2-year-old daughter Henley. They are the light of my life and our world spins around them, whether we like it or not. Also here today is the love of my life, my wife Kate, who is the most amazing wife, mother, and true-life partner I could ever imagine. Kate, I am in awe of your ability to balance a successful career and provide a loving home for our family, I love you and thank you. I would also like to thank and recognize my parents who have protected, provided and guided me throughout my life. Mom and Dad, I love you and the words "thank you" can never express the gratitude I have for the sacrifices you both made to raise myself and my three brothers, Frankie, Tate and Joey.

As an Eagle Scout from a patriotic family, I was instilled with a sense of service at a young age. That sense of service was further ingrained during my time at Texas A&M where the core values of Excellence, Integrity, Leadership, Loyalty, Respect and Selfless Service are paramount – which I continue to strive for each day. My love of our country led me to be commissioned in the United States Navy where I saw first-hand portions of the world who do not have the type of reliable energy we have in the United States. Also, in the Navy I was first acquainted with the DOE's Nuclear Weapons program as a Counter-Weapons of Mass Destruction Intelligence Officer.

Following law school, I was honored to serve in President Trump's first term as ARPA-E's Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor ushering in many of the programs and projects that exist today, including the first nuclear technology projects. After my time at ARPA-E, I was privileged to be selected as DOE's first Chief Commercialization Officer and the Director of the Office of Technology Transitions. In this role, I worked closely with this Committee and staff as I focused on ushering DOE technology out of labs and into the daily lives of Americans – maximizing their impact from Augusta to Albuquerque to Anchorage. Following my time at DOE, I continued my career in emerging technologies as I helped co-found a quantum technology start-up which was spun out of CalTech.

If confirmed, it will be a true honor to lead the talented, innovative, and dedicated team at ARPA-E. When I left ARPA-E to become the Department's Chief Commercialization Officer, I told the staff that the fact that my name was associated with theirs and the organization was one of the proudest accomplishments of my professional career and I feel the same today.

As members of this Committee and staff are well aware, energy and critical technologies are at an inflection point. Quantum, Artificial Intelligence, fusion, small modular reactors, geothermal, and the list goes on, but these technologies will fundamentally change how this country and the world produce and consume energy.

The Department of Energy's role in advancing these technologies through work with our National Labs, industry partners and the university ecosystem has never been more critical. ARPA-E is uniquely positioned to take the lead on high-risk, high reward research leading to technological developments that will better human lives throughout the U.S. and across the globe. The Trump Administration's forward-leaning approach to innovation and technology will require an interagency effort to ensure the United States continues to spearhead energy, and critical and emerging technologies. ARPA-E's unique authorities and structure allow for flexibility and nimble action to address these challenges in a timely and effective manner.

If confirmed, I intend to work closely with this Committee and Congress to effectively and efficiently lead ARPA-E and its talented and dedicated staff, who I consider the elite of the energy research community, to help drive innovation, to maintain American leadership in critical technology areas, and unleash American energy dominance.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks so much, Mr. Prochaska.
Dr. Mamula, we will hear from you next.

STATEMENT OF DR. NED MAMULA, NOMINATED TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Dr. MAMULA. Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Committee members all, good morning, and thank you very, very much for your time and the opportunity to be in front of this Committee. I am very honored and humbled to be here and very proud of the agency that I have been nominated to lead, the U.S. Geological Survey. My deepest thanks to Secretary Burgum and President Trump for the confidence they have reposed in me.

And Mr. Chairman, behind me are my wife Terri, my son Noah, and his wife Mariah. My son Aaron is joining us remotely, and my friend J.J. Brown is with us as well, and they have been a great source of strength.

But for me, the path to today has been basically an incredible personal and professional journey, starting out as a steelworker in my native Pittsburgh before attending college, becoming an entry-level geologist, and later working in the energy industry all over the country and the world. My academic work included major research in studies in Iceland and later in Wyoming's Bighorn Basin as part of my training at Penn State and Texas A&M University—two of our country's premier geology programs. Years later, I was privileged to help stand up a new mineral sustainability division within DOE Fossil Energy, established for the purpose of characterizing ore deposits for their critical mineral and rare earth element content. Then, for the past three years, I have been serving as Chief Geologist at GreenMet. Finally, Mr. Chairman, my co-author Ann Bridges and I produced two recent thought-provoking books on the issue of America's critical mineral import dependence and our desperately needed path to mineral independence.

Mr. Chairman, I am ready for this next assignment at the Geological Survey, should I be confirmed. That agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, or "the Survey" as we USGS veterans affectionately call it, is one of the oldest and most storied of our federal agencies. It is 150 years old. The success of the four great geological surveys of the American West during the 1870s provided the impetus for President Rutherford Hayes to sign—on March 3, 1879—the congressional bill appropriating money for the formation of the U.S. Geological Survey within the Department of the Interior. President Hayes's signature approved the Organic Act of the U.S. Geological Survey, a unique combination of mission responsibilities elegantly described in only 19 words, which are: "classification of the public lands, examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain." These Organic Act functions were critical in 1879 because the Federal Government had title to more than a billion acres of land across the West, of which only 200 million acres, or about 17 percent, had been surveyed. But after decades of adding more states and more federal lands, approximately four-fifths, or 80 percent, of our country still does not have geological map coverage at a scale that is necessary for detailed exploration of minerals and other resources. Therefore, we can appre-

ciate more fully the absolute importance of the USGS Organic Act today, and the need to laser focus our attention on the hard work of geologic mapping, discovery of energy and mineral resources, and inventorying other products or endowments of our national domain.

Mr. Chairman, the USGS appears to be more important today than it was in 1879, particularly given the recent explosion of demand for energy, critical minerals, rare earth elements, and technology metals, not to mention America's very, very risky critical mineral import overreliance, much of it from adversarial nations. Little wonder America's national security and economic stability will remain highly dependent on the original mission of the U.S. Geological Survey.

As our Secretary Doug Burgum says, "Map Baby Map!" and he is absolutely correct because the all-important geologic mapping must always precede the long road of exploration, discovery, and startup production of energy and minerals. Therefore, the Survey needs to dramatically reinforce its institutional strength in mapping across geology, but also in the other core missions.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, leading one of our nation's preeminent scientific agencies has never been and will never be easy. But my love and support for it, and the strong support of my USGS colleagues, my fellow scientists, and others, will be extremely helpful, should I be confirmed. Furthermore, I pledge to this Committee, to Secretary Burgum, and especially to President Trump, who graciously nominated me to this post, to uphold the USGS mission to the best of my ability.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I look forward to your Committee's questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Mamula follows:]

**Statement of Dr. Ned Mamula, Nominee for the Position of Director of the
United States Geological Survey at the Department of the Interior
Before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, United States Senate
May 14, 2025**

Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich, thank you very much for your time and the opportunity to be in front of this Committee—I am very honored and humbled to be here—and very proud of the agency that I have been nominated to lead—the U.S. Geological Survey. My deepest thanks to Secretary Burgum and President Trump for the confidence they have reposed in me.

For me, the path to today has been an incredible personal and professional journey—starting out as a steelworker in my native Pittsburgh before deciding to go to college—becoming an entry level geologist—with three stints in grad school—working at the Geological Survey and later in the energy industry all over the country and the world. My academic work included major research studies in Iceland and later in Wyoming’s Bighorn Basin as part of my training at Penn State and Texas A&M University—two of our country’s premier geology programs.

Years later I was privileged to help stand up a new mineral sustainability division within DOE Fossil Energy, established for the purpose of characterizing domestic ore deposits for their critical mineral and rare earth element content. For the past three years I have served as the Chief Geologist at GreenMet. Finally, my co-author Ann Bridges and I have produced two recent thought-provoking books on the issue of America’s critical mineral import dependence and its path to mineral independence.

Mr. Chairman, the U.S. Geological Survey, or “the Survey” as we USGS veterans affectionately call it—is one of the oldest and most storied of our federal agencies. The success of the four great geological surveys of the American West during the 1870s provided the impetus for President Rutherford Hayes to sign—on March 3, 1879—the Congressional bill appropriating money for the formation of the U.S. Geological Survey within the Department of the Interior. President Hayes’ signature approved the *Organic Act* of the USGS—a unique combination of mission responsibilities elegantly described in only 19 words—which are: ***“classification of the public lands, and examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain.”***

These Organic Act functions were critical in 1879 because the federal government held title to more than 1.2 billion acres of land, nearly all of it west of the Mississippi River, of which only 200 million acres or approximately 17 percent had been surveyed. After decades of adding more states and more federal lands, approximately four fifths or 80 percent of our country still does not have geologic map coverage at a scale that is needed for detailed exploration of minerals and other resources. Therefore, we can appreciate more fully the absolute importance of the USGS Organic Act today, and the need to focus our attention on the hard work of geologic mapping, discovery of energy and mineral resources, and inventorying other products of our national domain.

During its 150-year history, the USGS has collected millions of observations through geologic mapping, aerial photography, satellite imagery, geophysical measurements, and other data collection platforms. From these datasets the USGS has made thousands of maps for topography, geology, surface water, groundwater, mineral resource areas, mining districts and their ore deposits, natural hazards, ecosystems, land use categories, and for many other purposes and customers.

Mr. Chairman, the USGS mission appears to be even more important today than it was in 1879, particularly given the recent explosion of demand for energy resources, critical minerals, rare earth elements, and technology metals—not to mention America’s very risky critical mineral import overreliance—much of it from adversarial nations. Little wonder that America’s national security and economic stability will remain highly dependent on the original mission of the Geological Survey.

As Secretary Burgum likes to say: “Map Baby Map!” and he is absolutely correct because all-important geologic mapping must always precede the long road of exploration, discovery, and startup production of energy and minerals. Therefore, the Survey needs to dramatically reinforce its institutional strength of mapping across geology and the other core missions too.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, leading one of our Nation’s preeminent scientific agencies has never been—and will never be an easy task. But my love and support for it, and the strong support of my USGS colleagues, fellow scientists, and others will be extremely helpful—should I be confirmed. Furthermore, I pledge to this committee, to Secretary Burgum, and especially to President Trump—who graciously nominated me to this post—to uphold key USGS mission areas, and to increase the focus on classifying our lands,

mapping their geological structure, their energy and mineral wealth, and other endowments within our national domain.

In conclusion, the business of today's U.S. Geological Survey is urgent because our energy and mineral security is our national security—meaning America will need to rely on the USGS mission like never before! Mr. Chairman, with that I look forward to your committee's questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Mamula.

I like your description, by the way, of the Survey. The insiders call it "the Survey." That's great. I had a friend years ago who was a big fan of Mountain Dew, and I asked him whether he agreed with the assessment that it was the "nectar of the gods." And his response was curious. It reminded me of what you just said. He said, "Yes, but the gods just call it nectar, because to them, that's what it is." So "the Survey" it is.

All right, we will now begin alternating rounds of five-minute questions. Republicans, then Democrats, in order of seniority, subject to the earlybird rule, and I will begin.

Mr. Brightbill, why don't we start with you? Let's talk about NEPA for a moment. NEPA is a significant law and one that has to be followed. It requires agencies to "ensure that presently unquantified environmental amenities and values may be given appropriate consideration in decision-making, along with economic and technical considerations." That's from NEPA, Section 102, of course. Now, some NEPA experts argue, based on the plain text of that, that if a cooperating agency is substantively analyzing an environmental effect so that it can issue a permit, let's say, for example, a 404 permit under the Clean Water Act, then the agency need not assess the effects of the action on the waters covered by the 404 permit because those effects are not presently unquantified, or to whatever degree and whatever circumstances in which they are not presently unquantified.

I know that you are no stranger to NEPA, having worked previously in various government and private-sector positions in the law, working in this area, so I would welcome your thoughts on this observation.

Mr. BRIGHTBILL. Yes, thank you very much, Senator, and first of all, thank you very much for taking the time on Monday evening to meet with me prior to the hearing today, and as you know, based on our discussions, I absolutely agree that NEPA reform is a critical need for us to ultimately move forward in our reform of infrastructure and advancement of energy. I know a variety of bills have been circulated and proposals circulated on the Hill, but as someone who has both worked in government, litigating a tremendous volume of NEPA cases, candidly, once you are in the Federal Government and at the Environment and Natural Resources Division, as well as an individual who has litigated NEPA over the years on behalf of private entities and consulted many, many more than I have even actually litigated, there is a lot of talk about permitting reform.

Permitting reform is really a euphemism when you actually go and talk to industry players about the risks for NEPA reform. And NEPA reform really ought to be a euphemism for NEPA litigation reform because it is the NEPA litigation that creates the unquantifiable and incalculable risk of undertaking NEPA. Based on my many years of experience working both with federal agencies as well as private-sector entities, they are happy to try to quantify risks and assess risks, but ultimately, the real problem with NEPA is the unknowable back-end tail that comes from a judicial review system that has been created by common law, rather than really by a congressionally designed review apparatus, Senator. And as

you and I discussed, I think that's an area where there is a lot of opportunity for reform that could advance all manner of energy infrastructure projects—transmission, generation, distribution, throughout.

The CHAIRMAN. Right, great observations. So it's more than just permitting. Very often, more specifically, people are referring to NEPA, and when they are referring to the delays they encounter, those are more often the result of the litigation stage, rather than the pre-issuance of the record of decision stage. That's helpful.

Mr. Prochaska, let's turn to you next. During the first Trump administration, you were Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor for ARPA-E, the entity to which you have now been nominated. As I understand it, in the past, ARPA-E has funded R&D within the nuclear space, and if we are to meet the significant anticipated demand for baseload electric power in the coming decade, innovations in the nuclear sector could play a really critical role. Can you talk to us a little bit about the work of ARPA-E and the things that ARPA-E funded during the first Trump administration to increase the efficiency and output of traditional generating resources, such as nuclear?

Mr. PROCHASKA. Thank you very much for the question, Chairman, and thank you also for the time in your office. It was very valuable to hear your insights on ARPA-E and where we can go with the energy dominance that we are looking for.

It was a privilege in the first Trump administration to be part of the leadership team of ARPA-E, and in that role, one of the proudest programs and projects we started was about advanced reactors and understanding, simulating, and testing some of the more untraditional problems that come with those advanced reactors. But one of the key things that we did there was, we worked with the Office of Nuclear Energy to make sure that we weren't duplicating efforts within the Department. And I think one of the things that I would look forward to, if confirmed for ARPA-E, is because of my knowledge from my time at OTT and as Chief Commercialization Officer at the Department, I worked with every single office and every single lab at the Department of Energy, and I know the complex to a very, very good degree. And I come into ARPA-E with eyes wide open of what ARPA-E's capabilities are, what other offices in the Department do, and how we can help to work on the advanced high-risk, high-reward items that need to be attacked, whether it's in nuclear, whether it's in fossil energy, whether it's in fusion, whether it's in small modular reactors, which is nuclear, or geothermal. You can go through the list, but the ARPA-E portfolio is broad—the authorities are broad—and if confirmed, I intend to make sure that we attack all of those technologies as best as we possibly can.

The CHAIRMAN. Great. Thank you.

I have more questions, including for the other two I haven't asked questions to yet. Hopefully, we will be able to get to those in a subsequent round later in the hearing, but in the interest of time, since I am over, I am going to hand it over to Senator Heinrich.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Brightbill, at the legal direction of Congress, DOE has developed energy efficiency standards that have saved American families hundreds of dollars annually on utility costs. The current Administration is set on reversing these cost-saving efforts, and announced this week that they will eliminate many of these standards, which will undoubtedly raise energy costs for American families. Do you believe the actions announced by the Administration are consistent with the federal judge's orders to update those standards, and how would you approach enforcing energy efficiency standards in your new role, if you are confirmed?

Mr. BRIGHTBILL. Senator, thank you.

At this point, I am not at the Department of Energy, and so I have not been advising the Secretary and the program managers who are at the agency at this time regarding the actions they have undertaken. And I have not had an opportunity to review those executive orders or the legal bases for the actions that have been taken. I know within the context of those statutes, there are statutory reforms that were undertaken by Congress in the later part of the early aughts that related to those statutes that actually enhanced the capacity of the Department to consider economic considerations, and some of that post-dates some of the case law that I know is on the books and which many people point to in that area.

So, at this point, Senator, what I can commit to you is that, should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed as the General Counsel, that I will, of course, work with existing career staff and advisors at the Office of General Counsel to understand their existing legal reviews and then advise the Secretary and the program officials who are responsible for those policy decisions on their obligations under the laws and statutes, as well as the authorities that they have.

Senator HEINRICH. Mr. Prochaska, with electricity demand expected to grow for the next decade, I think many of us believe that we are going to need every electron that we can get for the foreseeable future. If confirmed, how will you make sure that ARPA-E is investing in a complete portfolio of next-generation energy technologies and not picking winners and losers?

Mr. PROCHASKA. Thank you very much for the question, Senator, and that is a very big part of the way ARPA-E operates. The way ARPA-E operates is, we bring in the best program managers that we can find. And those program managers bring the best ideas that they can, and they are forced through a crucible of internal debates and external reviews to come out with some of the best possible programs and projects we possibly can. And part of that analysis is, how does this make sense in the overall energy portfolio and move the ball forward on behalf of the United States and the world, because these technologies do go and help the world at the end of the day, in many cases.

And so, to answer your question, one of the reasons is, we are going to take the best projects, and I promise that that's going to be the process with which, if I am confirmed, ARPA-E continues to move forward with the best projects, and not picking winners and losers necessarily, but understanding what makes sense in the energy portfolio that is affordable, secure, reliable, and gets us to the end goals.

Senator HEINRICH. Mr. Brightbill, Congress has important oversight responsibilities over the Department, obviously. If confirmed, will you commit to responding to members of this Committee's request for information regarding DOE's compliance with the law?

Mr. BRIGHTBILL. Senator, if I am confirmed, I can—if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed—yes, I can assure you that we will comply with the law, and insofar as the Department is required to make responses to requests, we will do so.

Senator HEINRICH. Thank you. That is the right answer.

On May 5th, I, along with a number of other Members of Congress, sent Secretary Wright a letter regarding the Department's suspension of energy programs, cancellation of executed awards and contracts, as well as mass reductions in staffing and changes to contracting policies, and I very much look forward to receiving a full and complete response to that letter.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator McCormick.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Heinrich, and welcome and congratulations to our four nominees. Mr. Brightbill, good to see you in Pennsylvania, and I think our fathers may have served together when your dad was Majority Leader. So it's great to have you here, and another Pennsylvanian and two members of our Armed Services. We have got a great lineup here.

I want to start with you, Mr. Mamula. The most recent U.S. Government assessment of the Marcellus Shale, from 2019, showcased the effects of technological advancements. In that assessment, the government estimated natural gas availability in the Marcellus rose from two trillion to 84 trillion to 97 trillion in under 20 years. Now, knowing where those energy resources are located and how much exists is crucial to informing our strategy for energy dominance and energy independence. Unfortunately, USGS government resource assessments can lag behind industry developments. So my question is, what is your plan to ensure timely and regionally relevant updates to those assessments, and do you anticipate a need to adapt the resource evaluation framework to better account for unconventional sources of natural gas, like shale gas?

Dr. MAMULA. Thank you for that question. Thank you very much, Senator McCormick.

The thing that people need to understand is that technology sweeps through one field after another, after another, and it swept through the oil industry. It is sweeping through mining, timbering, and many other areas. When technology sweeps through, we have to back up and look at another methodology or modify the methodologies used to do resource assessments because the newer technologies allow us to basically get at more of that resource, and eventually, when proven, we call it a reserve. So, if confirmed, I want to make sure of the date of these resource assessments at USGS, what they contain, and how they could be improved, and, most importantly, do we have a bridge over to the private sector? Do we understand that technology that's right under our noses? And have our scientists gone out into the fracking fields and other places and looked at these things? Very important, and it's going to inform the way we do resource evaluation—actually, resource as-

essment, as we call it. So, that is an absolute definite thing that I would do, if confirmed, right away.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you.

Dr. MAMULA. Yes, sir.

Senator MCCORMICK. Mr. Prochaska, let me turn to energy demand and the fact that it's expected to grow radically, primarily driven by AI data center demand, and I believe nuclear energy, in which, of course, Pennsylvania plays a very dominant role, will help meet that demand. Pennsylvania is second in the nation for nuclear energy production and home to much of the technology included in every nuclear energy reactor in the United States. You have already talked about this in previous questions, but let me ask you to be a little more specific. How do you anticipate ARPA-E supporting the development of nuclear energy technologies, and in particular, innovations in fuel cycle technologies, and how would you think about the process for prioritizing and investing most heavily in the appropriate technologies?

Mr. PROCHASKA. Thank you very much for the question, Senator.

Going back to one of the things that I worked on, that came to fruition following my time at ARPA-E as Chief of Staff, was working on expanding some of the authorities of ARPA-E to address some of these challenges, exactly, particularly nuclear waste and the cycle that exists there. As the industry develops, there will be—and this is where kind of the tricky part of ARPA-E is, because we want to move technologies into industry, but we also want to work with industry partners to understand what they are not doing. And so, what I believe would help that cycle, and to answer your question, is engaging the industry, engaging the people that are on the cusp or even doing some of these activities and understand what their big pain points are and build that relationship, which is a lot of what I did as the Chief Commercialization Officer of the Department, is work with public-private partnerships, work with private industry to understand where their pain points are to make sure that we are not doing something that we are just taking something off the plate of private industry that they could do, but something that really is the ARPA-E motto, high-risk, high-reward technology, to get further down the path of making those actionable and efficient technologies that can really utilize and maximize the nuclear fuel, the nuclear process, and the nuclear industry as a whole.

Senator MCCORMICK. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I believe Senator Hickenlooper is up next.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to all of you for your willingness to put yourselves through this and take on these challenges.

Mr. Brightbill, I am a strong proponent of bipartisan permitting reform that includes targeted litigation reforms on various issues. In the House bill, they have proposed a radical overhaul of our judicial review system by proposing a kind of pay-to-play, or pay-for-play scheme. In your view, if someone pays, or a company pays 125 percent of the estimated costs of your environmental review, the idea is that judicial review would no longer apply. Do you believe that allowing companies to pay for the right to avoid judicial over-

sight or judicial scrutiny gives communities and tribes sufficient ability to amend or challenge or change specific projects?

Mr. BRIGHTBILL. Senator, first of all, I appreciate the opportunity to continue to talk about NEPA reform. As Senator Lee knows from my time in his office, I could geek out about this for a very, very long time. As to the specific House bill that you are referencing, I candidly have not seen the bill or the provision that you are referring to, and based on what you are describing to me, I am not, candidly, able to respond to it in total because I am not aware of what the ultimate policy—

Senator HICKENLOOPER. It's just basically if you pay a higher rate, you are exempt from judicial oversight. In other words, the courts have no role in approving the permit.

Mr. BRIGHTBILL. I think, Senator, I candidly want to look at the entirety of the bill and what the other reforms are and see how they tie in—

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Okay.

Mr. BRIGHTBILL [continuing]. With other provisions of the bill before I would opine as to that particular provision and want to understand the total context.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Okay.

Mr. Prochaska, I am a big fan of ARPA-E. I think you are going to—you know, you have the opportunity to catalyze transformational energy technologies and accelerate some of the commercialization of those things, and I think that's just going to be a big part of our future here, and hopefully it will involve a lot of Colorado companies in there as well. How can you ensure ARPA-E continues to serve as a springboard for these high-impact startups, the companies that really can be transformational, without sufficient long-term dependence on financing—federal financing?

Mr. PROCHASKA. Senator, first off, thank you very much for the question. And I have no doubt that Colorado will play a huge role in that ecosystem. One of the things, from an outsider's point of view, that I have always admired about Colorado is the major research institutions, whether it's NREL, Colorado School of Mines, Colorado State, University of Colorado—the list goes on. All are very well coordinated, not to mention outside of energy, but the quantum that is going on in the state is quite fascinating as well. So I commend the state on the efforts that go into that.

To answer your question, I talked a little bit about it earlier, that part of the crucible of becoming an ARPA-E project is the review process. And what we also do is, once you are an ARPA-E project, if confirmed, we will continue this active project management. That is continuous evaluation of these projects. It is a high-risk, high-reward effort, and you talked about how do we make sure some of these companies and products and technologies become companies. Part of that high-risk, high-reward means there is a high-reward at the end, but in between the high risk and the high reward, a lot of things fall off, and that's part of kind of the ARPA-E ethos, which is, we are going to continue to actively manage projects, put the best minds toward it, look at it with a fresh point of view as often as possible.

And then, to your last point, to make sure it's not on a long-term federal pipeline of funding to continue on for eternity—

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Right—

Mr. PROCHASKA. We want to make sure we are engaging with—whether it's venture capital, investors—that we are continuing to keep communicating with them and keep them educated on what we are doing at ARPA-E.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you.

And Dr. Mamula, first, just an idle curiosity—you went to Penn State. Did you do field geology camp?

Dr. MAMULA. Yes, sir.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Which one did you go to?

Dr. MAMULA. Well, they had Yellowstone/Bighorn.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Research—

Dr. MAMULA. They also—

Senator HICKENLOOPER. So you went to the YBRA?

Dr. MAMULA. YBRA, I have been there and I have also been to the other one across the Appalachians.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Right, yeah, I haven't been to that one, but I did do my geological field work through the Yellowstone/Bighorn. There can be no closer tie than having done the same field geology camp.

USGS is obviously critical for so much we are working on. I am going to be very brief in this question. Water-focused science is key for us in Colorado and the drought prone West, just because if you can't measure something, you are not going to be able to manage it. And yet, we have seen severe cuts at the USGS that threaten this essential work and the integrity of these long-term data resources. Keeping that data in place is critical. Are you willing to say, absolutely, you will make that a priority to maintain those systems of measure that we have been using and to expand those datasets?

Dr. MAMULA. Oh, Senator, absolutely. Look—

Senator KING. Can you get your mic a little closer?

Dr. MAMULA. Yes, Senator, this has to be a priority, and if confirmed, I am going to make it my business to make sure it is. Now, the dataset integrity, is what you are getting at?

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Well, the cuts in funding—they have cut almost a third of the budget, and part of that means that they are talking about just getting—we don't need to save this data because it doesn't seem relevant now. Whereas, in science, mostly, as you know, oftentimes data that doesn't seem relevant today, five years from now, seems really relevant.

Dr. MAMULA. Right. If confirmed, and I am going out there, and we are going to look at our data collection, and you know, with the capacity of data storage today, there is really no need to dispose of data. We can hang on to data as long as we need to, and by the way, there is plenty of data that can be digitized and put to work, again, years and years after it was first published. So this is a priority. USGS is a data factory. So this is—what is produced there should be also saved and—

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Thank you.

Dr. MAMULA. Yes.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. I appreciate it very much.

And Ms. Pierce, I have questions for you, but I will put them in writing.

I yield back. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. We will turn now to Senator Hoeven, who twice in the last couple of weeks has been my stunt double as I have been called into other hearings.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. I am told he is going to do his questions today entirely in Spanish, which should be exciting.

Senator HOEVEN. Muchas gracias, mi amigo.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, I appreciate both of you. Thanks to all of our witnesses who are here.

Mr. Mamula, thanks for coming in to visit with me yesterday. And I do have to warn you before Hickenlooper gets out of the room, that you have got to be careful with him because I think he is a geologist too. So you can't spoof him like you do the rest of us, you know? He knows his stuff. And he was a Governor, too, so we really like him a lot.

[Laughter.]

Senator HOEVEN. So thanks again for being here. You know the story in the Bakken, in my state?

Dr. MAMULA. Right.

Senator HOEVEN. You know, when I was Governor back there in 2000, you know, there wasn't the horizontal drilling, and the shale plays could be produced from a technological standpoint—you could get oil out of them, but you couldn't do it on a commercially viable basis. And so, we actually started with our state geological survey to do that analysis. It actually had been done off some work Price had done in Colorado, in Senator Hickenlooper's state, which you are probably familiar with, and then, we followed up at the state level and actually started making inroads. And they tried in Montana a little bit because they thought maybe the geology was a little better, but it proved it wasn't, plus the fact that they had more regulatory burden over there because we really created an environment with incentives and a favorable regulatory environment.

But the geological analysis was critical, and then, once we finally got it going, we got the U.S. Geological Survey to engage. And then, once they did it, of course, then companies really started coming in, and it took off. That was about 2006, 2008. So it shows the importance of what you do in terms of producing more energy in this country because that was critical. And I kept trying to get them to come in, and that is how we eventually did it.

So now we are in situations in the shale plays where we have to put legs on those shale plays, right, in the unconventional areas, because of the declines and the curves and all that. So, will you work with us and tell us how you will work with us to make sure that we are able to go in with tertiary recovery methods? So for example, pulling the CO₂ off coal plants and putting it downhole for a CO₂ flood. And talk about that, because this is a big deal if we are going to get this energy dominance and sustain it. Talk to me about how you can help us get that done.

Dr. MAMULA. Okay. Great question, Senator Hoeven, and thank you.

When you add the North Dakota Geological Survey and the schools that you have there to my Texas A&M and Penn State, we are ready to rock on these reserve estimates.

Senator HOEVEN. No pun intended with the ready to rock?

[Laughter.]

Dr. MAMULA. But Senator, the more the USGS is engaged with our industry, the better for both sides of that equation. Look, the USGS has a great ability to look at a map, produce a cross section, and give us a 3D block view of that piece of real estate and the minerals, oil, gas, and other endowments in that. So in the case of North Dakota, I think, if there was any hesitation, perhaps maybe part of that was not on federal land, maybe they felt they wouldn't, you know, but federal land, absolutely, that is the USGS Organic Act. Go off of federal land, maybe it wasn't quite as—but if I am confirmed, Senator Hoeven, I am going out there, and it's going to be all hands on deck for all lands because there is no need or reason to strand a resource.

And to your point on tertiary recovery, if we have excess carbon dioxide here and a need for it over here to drive tertiary recovery, we get a two-fer. We take it from here and we put it over there. We don't want to waste our resources. Things that don't come out of the ground, Senator, as I said to you yesterday, their value is essentially zero.

Senator HOEVEN. Yeah, no, that's right-on. It's a two-fer. Would you be willing to come to North Dakota with me? We have state, we have—fortunately, we have a lot of private, and I know that's a frustration for our Chairman, because they have so much public, but we have a lot of private, state, Native American, and federal, and they are all intertwined, and one can impede the other if we don't all work together.

Dr. MAMULA. If confirmed, Senator, I commit to you to come up there and look at it, and I commit to the Survey that we reexamine land ownership and maybe dispatch with the boundaries. As far as geology, they are kind of artificial anyway.

Senator HOEVEN. Right.

Dr. MAMULA. An ore deposit doesn't care whether it's located on federal, state, or private land, but it's sitting there saying, "Wow, develop me." So this is something I will look into, and you have my word on that.

Senator HOEVEN. Mr. Chairman, just one final quick question, if I can beg your indulgence?

The geothermal—we are doing a lot more in geothermal. Is there any synergy that you see between the energy industry, in terms of oil and gas, and the geothermal? Opportunities?

Dr. MAMULA. Senator Hoeven, sometimes if you have an abandoned well in the oil industry, in the energy industry, or a gas well, oil well, whatever, that may well serve a dual purpose. Maybe it has another life and it has deepened into the geothermal pool that's available. In North Dakota, I don't know, we are going to take a look at your geothermal resources there. Then, we are going to say, okay, if we can get this amount, then you have geothermal reserves, and then the easiest way to get to it is maybe to use something that's already in place.

Senator, if I may, it's kind of like mine tailings or metal mine dumps laying on the ground. To me, they are nothing but ore deposits on the surface. And it's the same with your geothermal resources there. If we can get at it in an easier way, we should take advantage of it, absolutely. And you have my commitment to work with you on that.

Senator HOEVEN. Right, some of our wells are two miles deep, and then we go out vertically for three miles or more in multiple directions, with 12 miles on one pad. So it might create some opportunities.

Dr. MAMULA. I think it's setting a stage for another energy play in North Dakota, i.e., geothermal.

Senator HOEVEN. Yes, thank you, sir.

Again, thanks, Mr. Chairman, appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Cortez Masto.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Prochaska, let me start with you. Do you support an all-of-the-above energy approach?

Mr. PROCHASKA. Thank you very much for the question, Senator.

I support an all-of-the-above energy approach if it's reliable, affordable, and secure. I think we need to look at the portfolio.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Do you think solar and wind are reliable and affordable and secure?

Mr. PROCHASKA. There are some cases where that very well could be and there are also enabling technologies that could maybe enhance certain technologies—not particularly those two—but I think that is part of the opportunity ahead of us is to make sure we find out what is keeping, if anything, from affordable, reliable, and secure technologies and help that.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

Are there any specific areas of research that you believe ARPA-E must prioritize to remain competitive?

Mr. PROCHASKA. I would have to look at the portfolio because your question is as if we have to maintain. I am not well in depth in the whole portfolio right now, as it stands, from many years ago when I was there. And looking at those projects as they evolve, that would be part of the evaluation.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Okay.

In your written testimony, you acknowledged that new critical technologies are at an inflection point. I couldn't agree more, absolutely. And please know that Nevada entities have leveraged ARPA-E funding in recent years to uncover exciting solutions, such as innovative research with Nevada Gold Mines and the University of Nevada Reno to study new techniques for the separation of rare earth elements from ores. There is so much going on. There is so much opportunity. But here's my question for you. In President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 budget, he calls for a 57 percent cut to ARPA-E—a 57 percent cut. So my question to you, if confirmed, how would you manage that, and what specific actions would you take to stand up for your agency and the tools it needs, and will you then have to make priorities on which areas of research that you would support? And I would be curious what those areas would be.

Mr. PROCHASKA. Senator, I think within—to first start with the areas, I would not dare sit here today and say I know. I think in something like an ARPA-E, an advanced research projects agency, and this high-reward, high-risk technology, the most dangerous thing that someone can say is, particularly prior to—

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Can I stop you? I'm sorry, because I only have so much time.

Mr. PROCHASKA. Yes, Senator.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. You keep talking about high-risk, high-reward. What is that? What projects are those? What are you talking about, specifically?

Mr. PROCHASKA. I think it's the ability to put dollars for an exponential return to impact on the United States taxpayer and ensure that we are making the biggest bang for the buck. And really, shooting, as we talk about sometimes, moonshot-type technologies. To answer your question, we will maximize the resources that are at ARPA-E to make sure we are effectively and efficiently accomplishing the mission to deliver the best we possibly can for the U.S. taxpayer.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. I only have so much time, so I am going to jump to—and I apologize, I don't get the chance to ask you all questions, so we will submit some for the record.

But Ms. Pierce, I did have one for you, but we will submit it for the record because I know you are patiently waiting here.

But there is one that I have to ask Dr. Mamula about because, as you know, Nevada is at the forefront of developing our nation's critical mineral supply chain and reducing dependence on China. And I have heard all of you comment to some extent that that is absolutely necessary. The mining industry in Nevada is bolstered by invaluable research conducted at our universities, including the Mackay School of Mines at the University of Nevada, Reno through grants from USGS programs such as Earth MRI, STATEMAP, and the National Geological and Geophysical Data Preservation Program. Our universities are able to create publicly available data regarding the location of critical mineral resources, to archive mineral compositions of different regions, and accelerate mine permitting by providing baseline geological data for prospective projects. I fear that without this research, Nevada and the rest of the United States may fall further behind in the race to develop reliable critical mineral supply chains.

Unfortunately, in the President's Fiscal Year 2026 budget, he proposes to slash the USGS by about half a billion dollars and cut funding to universities. Yet, it says the Agency will focus on achieving dominance in energy and critical minerals. Now, I understand that you are not currently at the Agency, but can you explain how cutting critical research like this will actually help the U.S. achieve dominance in energy and critical minerals, and how would you manage that cut to your budget?

Dr. MAMULA. Senator Cortez Masto, thank you for the question, and by the way, Nevada is a great geology state. I go there every year, and I know the people in your state geological survey.

To answer your question, let me take it this way—the federal funds from USGS flow down to the state geological surveys. That's one of the greatest partnerships you can believe, and it's just fabu-

lous. The state surveys are the engine behind much of our mapping. So we have state and federal working together. Senator, I am not privy, or I don't understand the nuances of the President's budget because I am not in there yet, but I will make it a very number one priority to look at that budget and make sure that we have the money to drive the program forward, which is the President's priority, that is, to make the critical minerals, rare earth, and technology metals a national priority because it is a national security priority, and that would be my focus from day one, minute one, when I walk in that building, if confirmed.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Will you promise me this? If you, once you get in there, and the cuts are made—and they are going to be significant cuts to you, including cuts to grant funding—that whatever little funds you do have for grant funding, that you do not make a decision that you are going to pick blue states over red states.

Dr. MAMULA. Senator, I need to take a look at that. I can't envision, when we do geology and funding and cooperation between state and federal, that there's a blue state/red state—Senator, let me just go on the record and say that critical minerals, our energy, our rare earths, and our technology metals—I hope, and sometimes secretly I pray, that this is the greatest non-partisan issue before us in our time. We have to—

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. And you would commit to keeping it non-partisan?

Dr. MAMULA. Senator, we are scientists, and if we get into the weeds of politics, it kind of spoils our credibility, and I would never do that to the USGS.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the sages of New England, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said, "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." I have never been at a hearing where what is being done is at such variance with what is being said.

Mr. Prochaska, you waxed eloquent about the talented and dedicated staff of ARPA-E and all the great work that they have done. Their budget is being cut by 57 percent. How do you justify all this nice talk about what you are going to do when your agency is being cut more than in half? You can talk until you are blue in the face, but what speaks here is—57 percent cut. Tell me—and you went through your entire testimony, all of your answers to your questions, until you got to Senator Cortez Masto, and never once mentioned renewables, the fastest growing, cheapest source of electricity in the United States today. And let me read from the budget document: "Green New Scam technologies are not supported." That's in the ARPA-E budget document. "Green New Scam technologies are not supported." That means no renewables, right? You've got an order from the President of the United States, no renewables. Is that correct?

Mr. PROCHASKA. That is not correct, Senator.

Senator KING. So, he didn't mean—what does he mean, "Green New Scam" technologies? He is talking about solar and wind. Everybody knows that.

Mr. PROCHASKA. Senator, I can't opine on what the definition of that language is. I can commit to, if confirmed, that the ARPA-E and the portfolio that we investigate and look into will include all technologies that I mentioned to the Senator—

Senator KING. So, it was just a coincidence that when you listed the technologies, the nearest you got to renewables was a mention of geothermal last. You never mentioned solar and wind, and you used the code word "reliable," which is a new code word for "we don't like solar and wind because they are intermittent," but as you indicated in your answer to Senator Cortez Masto, when you have batteries with solar and wind, it is baseload. Is that correct?

Mr. PROCHASKA. Senator, it very well could be. It depends on the situation. But the portfolio that we will investigate will include all technologies, and reliable is important to the energy that we need for the future to fund some of the emerging technologies that we have talked about.

Senator KING. I appreciate what you are saying here. What I am going to watch is what you do, because budgets are policy. And this budget, the policy of this budget is a drastic cut—drastic cut—more than half in ARPA-E, I think one of the most important agencies in the U.S. Government. It is where fracking started, the shale revolution started with research funds from the Department of Energy. And we are talking about a more than half cut. So I am going to watch what you do and not what you say.

Now, Mr. Mamula, you talked about the importance of data and science and all of those kinds of things, and yet, there have been reports in the last few weeks that biological research in the USGS is being cut entirely and 25 Water Science Centers, which—stream gauges, measuring storms.

[The reports referred to follow:]

INSIDE CLIMATE NEWS[Science](#)

USGS Water Data Centers May Soon Close, Threatening States' Water Management

The Trump administration has terminated the leases of 25 U.S. Geological Survey Water Science Centers, which inform the water decisions of local and state governments across the country.

By [Wyatt Myskow](#)
April 29, 2025

Across the country, the data collected at stream gauges managed by the U.S. Geological Survey are used to implement drought measures when streamflows are low, alert local authorities of floods, help administer water to users on rivers and issue pollution discharge permits required by the Clean Water Act for communities across the country.

But more than two dozen USGS Water Science Centers that house the employees and equipment to manage those gauges and equipment will soon have their leases terminated after being targeted by the Department of Government Efficiency, headed by billionaire Elon Musk. Data collected by the centers inform [studies](#) of the condition of the country's water resources and shape local and state water management plans.

It's the latest in the [Trump administration's assault on science and federal agencies](#), and means that centers from Alaska to Massachusetts will close once their leases are up, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, a nonprofit that supports government employees. The leases of 16 out of the 25 centers end Aug. 31, 2025. Staffers at targeted centers, speaking anonymously because they are not authorized to speak to the media, said they are in the dark as to what happens when the leases end and how

their operations, vital to water management across the country, will be able to continue, though talks continue about renewing some of the affected leases.

“These [centers] are just super, super important, and there’s no rhyme or reason, no thought at all given to canceling these leases,” said Kyla Bennett, a scientist and attorney formerly with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, now working as PEER’s science policy director. “They’re doing it because it’s convenient, because these particular centers happen to be up for renewal.”

Most centers have no plans to vacate facilities, which would require relocating employees, vehicle fleets and equipment. A staffer, whose identity is being withheld because they are not authorized to speak to the press, said they only learned of the termination of the lease for the center where they work when the landlord asked them where they were going after the General Services Administration canceled it at the direction of DOGE.

The equipment requires regular monitoring to maintain the quality of the data and provide repairs as needed. In a worst case scenario, workers said, the termination of the leases would result in employees being unable to get out in the field to make the necessary checkups and repairs, making the agency unable to produce the data. In the best case, maintenance will take longer, and data quality will decrease, potentially affecting some operations.

“We are actively working with GSA to ensure that every facility and asset is utilized effectively, and where necessary, identifying alternative solutions that strengthen our mission,” a USGS spokesperson said in a statement. “These efforts reflect our broader commitment to streamlining government operations while ensuring that scientific endeavors remain strong, effective, and impactful. This process is ongoing, and we will provide updates as more information becomes available.”

One of the Water Science Centers whose lease will expire this year is the USGS field office in Moab, Utah, the town famed for its proximity to [Arches](#) and [four other national parks in the region](#).

David O’Leary, the center director at the USGS’ Utah Water Science Center, couldn’t comment on the termination of the site’s lease or its future, but said

the Moab field office services sites across 24,000 square miles in southern Utah—a landscape bigger than many states.

The Moab office operates and monitors more than 30 stream gauges, eight water quality sites, five meteorological sites, two groundwater monitoring sites and one sediment monitoring site. Many of those, he said, send information in real time to federal, tribal, state and local partners about floods and the flows of streams and rivers in the Colorado River Basin and even provide data for the administering of state water rights during drought conditions.

“They cover a lot of territory, and I think they provide a lot of value to Utah and water users in the Upper Colorado River Basin, and we’re really proud of what they can accomplish out of that office,” O’Leary said, adding he’s hopeful operations will continue for the field office.

“You can’t manage what you can’t measure.”

— Blake Bingham, Utah Division of Water Rights

The USGS is vital to how Utah manages the “precious and limited resource” that is water across the state, said Blake Bingham, the deputy state engineer at the Utah Division of Water Rights, which administers water to users across the state.

Utah, like much of the West, uses the prior appropriation system in which users who are first in time to use water have their rights to it prioritized. The stream gauges managed by the USGS inform those decisions, he said. When they measure drought conditions, the state can then cut water deliveries to junior users to protect those with earlier, prioritized rights. It’s something they do every day, and it is not possible without the help of USGS, he said. The big concern for the Division of Water Rights is that without a field office, USGS staff would not be able to monitor and fix the gauges.

“You can’t manage what you can’t measure,” Bingham said. “So it’s just a fundamental part of what we do.”

The state of Utah also funds roughly two-thirds of the stream gauges operated by the USGS, said Candice Hasenyager, the director of the Utah Division of Water Resources, and has contracts with the agency for those services. The work the USGS Water Science Centers do across the country is largely funded by states, not the federal government.

The data is “absolutely foundational to our understanding of the current and past hydrology,” of the state, Hasenyager said, and shapes Utah’s long-term water planning, noting that 95 percent of its water supply starts as snowpack that then melts into runoff found in streams and rivers that are tracked by the USGS.

“We don’t really know how they would manage it if that office was closed,” she said, and the potential loss of its lease has put the state’s planning in an uncertain place.

Some leases may be restored, staffers told Inside Climate News, at the urging of the USGS, though it is uncertain how many may stay open.

“We’re very concerned about being able to manage our water resources within the state of Utah” without the assistance of USGS and other targeted federal programs, said Hasenyager, and the state will continue to communicate the importance those programs to the federal government.

Correction: A previous version of this story misstated the amount of Utah’s water supply that starts in the snowpack. The state gets 95 percent of its water from snowpack, not 99 percent.

Science

Trump swings budget ax at USGS biology research

Plan to eliminate \$307 million ecosystem program could face obstacles in Congress

18 APR 2025 – 6:00 PM ET – By Erik Stokstad

The White House is expected to ask Congress to wipe out the entire biological research program at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in its upcoming 2026 budget request, according to an internal email seen by *Science*. This year, USGS—a \$1.6 billion research agency within the Department of the Interior—will spend \$307 million on its Ecosystems Mission Area. The research informs conservation of endangered species, state management of game and other wildlife, responses to wildfire and sea level rise, and other areas.

“We’re deeply worried,” says Ed Arnett, CEO of the nonprofit Wildlife Society and an adjunct wildlife biologist at Colorado State University. “It would be devastating to blow this up” and “a key loss of science capacity.”

The email, sent yesterday by Anne Kinsinger, associate director of ecosystems at USGS, notified colleagues that the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has ordered the agency to design a plan to slow and then cease all activities in its Ecosystems Mission Area in the next fiscal year, which begins in October. That plan is due to OMB within 3 months. “We recognize this is a challenging task,” Kinsinger wrote. USGS has appealed to OMB and asked for “some funding” to be put back into the budget request for ecosystems research, according to Kinsinger’s email.

<https://www.science.org/content/article/trump-swings-budget-ax-usgs-biology-research>

About 1200 USGS employees, including many scientists, work in the ecosystem program. They are based at laboratories around the country and in cooperative research units at universities and in partnership with state agencies. USGS scientists study how ecosystems respond to climate change, invasive species, diseases including H5N1 bird flu and [white nose disease](#) in bats, and pollution such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or “forever chemicals.”

It was research and analysis at USGS that informed the Interior Department’s 2008 decision to put [polar bears on the endangered species list](#), for example. Agency studies on migrations of Rocky Mountain elk and other big game species led to an effort to improve habitat in western states. USGS runs a century-old bird research program and also monitors North American bats. The agency’s Climate Adaptation Science Centers receive the largest share of the funding, \$83 million this year, followed by species research and land management programs.

Whether state agencies or universities could handle the load is “a big question mark,” Arnett says. A federal agency can conduct long-term monitoring, and have a broad perspective, that is particularly valuable, notes ecosystem ecologist Jill Baron, who spent her career at USGS. “Problems do not stay within narrow boundaries, and there are often unintended consequences or even surprises.”

The proposal to eliminate biological research at USGS is not unexpected. Project 2025, a policy [wish list](#) from the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation that President Donald Trump’s administration has often followed, includes this goal: “Abolish the Biological Resources Division of [USGS] and obtain necessary scientific research about species of concern from universities via competitive requests for proposals.” The Biological Resources Division is the former name of the ecosystem program, prior to a 2010 reorganization.

<https://www.science.org/content/article/trump-swings-budget-ax-usgs-biology-research>

Congress will have the final say on USGS funding. In the past, lawmakers have supported [restoring](#) funding to the agency after the White House proposed cuts.

With reporting by Warren Cornwall.

Senator KING. I get the feeling this is like, if we don't measure anything on climate change, it will go away. Is that what is going on here?

Dr. MAMULA. I don't think so, Senator. Thanks for the question. Let's discuss it. Again, I am not at the Survey, but I want to take a look. If confirmed, I want to go out and look at each and every single program, its budget, and cuts proposed, and——

Senator KING. Well, somebody's already done that and cut your budget 37 percent before you even walk in the door.

Dr. MAMULA. Yeah, well, again——

Senator KING. That's done.

Dr. MAMULA. The cut——

Senator KING. Assuming Congress agrees, which, I hope they won't.

Dr. MAMULA. Yeah, I don't know about that either, I am not familiar. But the program, the contents of the program that has a cut associated with it, I am not familiar, I don't know what's being cut.

Senator KING. I thought you were pretty familiar with USGS.

Dr. MAMULA. I am, but I don't know what is——

Senator KING. Do you believe it's appropriate to cut all of their biological research programs?

Dr. MAMULA. Well, I have to see what they are talking about. If they are talking about——

Senator KING. All means all, as I understand.

Dr. MAMULA. Yeah, well, still, I would be more comfortable, once confirmed, looking at that and saying, okay, is this a cut deserved, or should we actually have a plus-up, or what?

Senator KING. How about eliminating 25 Water Research Centers around the country? Is that a good idea? You talked rhapsodically to Senator Hickenlooper about data and how important data is. This is critically important data that it appears we are not going to collect anymore.

Dr. MAMULA. I want to see again what cuts they are talking about. That will tell me where the data is either being cut or not being cut, and then what's left on the table, and then we say, yes, we can still do our mission with what has not been cut.

Senator KING. It looks to me like what is being cut is data that will be produced to demonstrate the danger of climate change to our economy, to our people, to our country, to our environment. And you know, not collecting the data doesn't mean the problem isn't going to be there. Collecting the data can alert us to where there are problems and where we can deal with them. I hope that you—you say you are going to look at this—the problem is, as I say, you are walking into a shop that has already been cut by more than a third.

So, Mr. Chairman, you know, this isn't personal for you people. I don't know you. I am sure you want to do the right thing, but let's get real here and try to face the reality. And to come in here and talk, you know, about how wonderful USGS is and how wonderful ARPA-E is, which I think it is, at the same time that it's being cut, these two agencies are being cut—in one case by over 50 percent, in the other case by more than a third—it just doesn't pass the straight-face test.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks so much, Senator King.

We are going to wrap up in a moment. Any additional questions that we may have had will be submitted in writing.

Before I do the closing wrap-up, I am going to turn to Senator Heinrich for some additional thoughts.

Senator HEINRICH. I have a number of questions I will be happy to submit for the record for the rest of you. I think what you are hearing from Senator King and others on this panel is the fact that budgets are a reflection of our values. And what we see in this budget is a disregard for science. When you are saying that two of the most preeminent institutions of science that have benefited our economy over and over again should get an almost 40 percent and almost 60 percent cut, you are saying we don't value science. And I hope this Congress will send a very different message.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks, Senator Heinrich.

I would like to thank the witnesses for attending today. Each of you comes with a wealth of knowledge and has been very helpful today. So thanks for your cooperation. Thanks to the Senators, also, for being here and taking the time to cast the votes and to question.

Questions for the record for the hearing will be due by 6:00 p.m. this evening. The record for the hearing will remain open for statements until 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 15.

Thanks again to the members of the Committee. On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to extend congratulations to all of the nominees, including those we recommended favorably to the floor today and those who have gone through the process today during the hearing portion.

I look forward to working with all the Senators on the Committee as we continue to consider each of the President's nominees within the jurisdiction of the Committee in such a productive manner. I hope every Senator on the Committee will work with me to help persuade leadership on both sides of the aisle to bring these nominations to the floor as soon as possible.

The meeting stands adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:08 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Jonathan Brightbill

Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: Although Secretary Wright denies it, it is a fact that the DOE has cancelled, delayed, and withheld congressionally appropriated funds.

Do you believe this is unlawful or inconsistent with appropriations law?

Response: Since I am not currently at the Department, I do not know the facts and circumstances relating to these actions. Therefore, I am not in a position to analyze the internal assessments and justifications related to any funding decisions that have been made to date. My twenty-five years of legal experience and involvement in thousands of legal matters have taught me that facts matter when providing sound legal advice. My time at DOJ also taught me the importance of consulting with career subject-matter experts in the government's legal departments about important legal nuances before reaching conclusions. If confirmed, I commit to using this experience and apply this approach to giving clear and impartial legal counsel to Secretary Wright and other policy leaders to provide for their compliance with the law.

Question 2: The Office of Assistant General Counsel for Enforcement is responsible for ensuring manufacturers deliver products that meet energy and water conservation standards.

- Have you been consultation with the White House or any official representing the President regarding enforcing these rules and standards that are statutory required?
- How will you approach enforcing energy efficiency standards in your new role if confirmed?

Response: I have not had any consultations with the White House or officials from the Administration regarding any possible enforcement decisions. If confirmed, my responsibility will be to give clear, objective legal advice to ensure the Department carries out its statutory responsibilities in compliance with the law. As I did at the Department of Justice, my enforcement approach will be to consult with relevant career attorneys and investigators who have developed a case. I will assess the facts presented, the applicable law, agency priorities, the gravity of putative violations, the culpability of an actor, economic benefit from a violation, prior precedent, deterrence, and numerous other long-recognized considerations to federal law enforcement decisions.

Question 3: You know your job will be to ensure that the Department's decisions are legally sound and can hold up to scrutiny in court.

- Do you believe it is ever appropriate for the Department to defy court orders?
- Do you believe it is ever appropriate for the Department to defy a congressional subpoena?

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Jonathan Brightbill

Response: If confirmed, I will provide objective legal counsel to ensure the Department appropriately meets its legal obligations. With regard to congressional subpoenas, I believe they must be taken seriously and handled with the utmost respect for Congress's oversight role. While there may be instances where legal questions arise -- such as executive privilege or the scope of a subpoena -- those issues will be addressed through proper legal channels and practice. There is established case law recognizing circumstances under which it can be appropriate for a Department or agency officials not to comply with court orders. I cannot speculate whether any of those precedents might apply to an issue that may arise should I be confirmed. If confirmed, I will use my experience to give clear and impartial legal counsel to Department leaders regarding their authorities and obligations under the law.

Question 4: During President Trump's first term, the administration sought to build a wall across the U.S. Mexico border. DOJ attorneys in the Environment and Natural Resources Division were tasked with sorting out ownership of the land to build the wall. You have been previously quoted as working on the project.

Is that accurate? What exactly was your role?

Response: During my service at the Department of Justice, I worked on a range of matters as part of my responsibilities within the Environment and Natural Resources Division. This included work relating to the government's exercise of eminent domain to acquire land for construction of the border barriers, as well as defending legal challenges to the execution of those programs. While I cannot discuss specific details due to legal obligations and confidentiality, I can confirm that I was not setting policy but rather providing counseling and supervising litigation for the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, and other policymaking agencies consistent with my role as a Justice Department litigator.

Question 5: According to a February 26, 2025, Washington Post story, the EPA is reportedly considering repealing the Obama-era "Endangerment Findings." The same story mentions that you have reportedly advised the administration regarding this matter.

Is that accurate? If so, please describe in detail how you advised the administration on this matter.

Response: I am not currently in the administration, and I am not advising the administration regarding the Obama-era Endangerment Findings. Out of respect for attorney-client privilege and my ethical duty of confidentiality as an attorney, I cannot comment on legal advice I may have previously provided to others outside of government regarding the operation of the Clean Air Act. Should I be confirmed, my role will not be a scientific or policymaking position. As an attorney, I will use my knowledge and experience to give clear and impartial legal counsel to Department leaders regarding their authorities and obligations under the law.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Jonathan Brightbill

Questions for the Record from Senator Steve Daines

Question 1: Mr. Brightbill, if confirmed to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy, do you commit to working with Congress to implement responsible energy policy reforms across the Department to drive energy independence and ensure the security and prosperity of the American people?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress in a manner consistent with my role as the Department's chief legal advisor. I will advise the Secretary and other policymakers to ensure they understand their authority to implement energy policies lawfully, effectively and in support of the national interest. My focus will be on ensuring that DOE's actions to reform energy policy, advance energy independence, and ensure energy security are grounded in law.

Questions for the Record from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: This administration has made its central goal to sharply reduce the number of federal workers under the guise of efficiency. Instead, the layoffs have been chaotic, haphazard, and ruled illegal in the courts. The administration has also frozen many Congressionally authorized funding programs, including at the Department of Energy. The impact of these firings and funding freezes has been felt in Colorado and across the U.S.

If nominated, you will serve as the legal counsel for the Department of Energy. What is your opinion on the legality of agencies freezing funds that have been approved by Congress? Will you work to restore funding where it has been halted?

Response: If confirmed, my role will be to ensure decisions by DOE leadership are made within the boundaries of the law and advance the mission of the Office of General Counsel to support the Secretary of Energy and the President. Since I am not currently at the Department, I do not know the facts and circumstances relating to employment actions. Therefore, I am not in a position to analyze the internal assessments and justifications related to any funding decisions that have been made to date. My twenty-five years of legal experience and involvement in thousands of legal matters have taught me that facts matter when providing sound legal advice. If confirmed, I commit to using this experience to provide clear, candid and consistent counsel to leadership regarding the Department's legal obligations and the impact that changes in funding could have on the mission of the Office of General Counsel.

Question 2: I am a strong proponent of bipartisan permitting reform that includes targeted litigation reforms. However, House Republicans have proposed a radical overhaul of our judicial review system by proposing a pay-for-play scheme. In the House proposal, if you pay 125% of the estimated cost of your environmental review, judicial review no longer applies.

- Do you believe allowing companies to pay for the right to avoid judicial scrutiny gives communities and tribes sufficient ability to amend, challenge, or block projects?

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Jonathan Brightbill

- If a company breaks the law or an agency blatantly bypasses the Administrative Procedures Act, do you believe they should be held accountable, regardless of a payment to avoid such scrutiny?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress in a manner consistent with my role as the Department's chief legal advisor. I am not familiar with the legislation referenced, and what other provisions, public participation processes, conditions, and definitions may apply to the mechanism described. There are many statutes where Congress has determined it appropriate to bar judicial review, including in the context of infrastructure development, based on a variety of circumstances and conditions. I would need to study the specific litigation referenced and all such corollary provisions before I might appropriately comment with respect to one in isolation. If confirmed, my enforcement approach in the event a company breaks the law will be, like at the Department of Justice, to assess the facts presented, the applicable law, the gravity of putative violations, the culpability of an actor, and numerous other long-recognized considerations to federal law enforcement decisions. I will provide clear, objective legal advice to Department policymakers regarding their authorities and obligations under the law relevant to their decision making.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Tina Pierce**

Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: Although Secretary Wright denies it, it is a fact that the DOE has cancelled, delayed, and withheld congressionally appropriated funds.

Do you believe this is unlawful or inconsistent with appropriations law?

Response: While I cannot speak to the specifics of any funding decisions at DOE today, I commit to following the law.

Question 2: The CFO at DOE handles a variety of sensitive information, including Personally Identifiable Information (PII), procurement, financial, and proprietary information, including Official Use Only Information (OUOI).

How will you ensure only appropriate personnel have access to this data?

Response: Safeguarding sensitive information is a core responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer. If confirmed, I will work with relevant DOE officials to ensure that robust access controls and protocols are in place across all systems and business processes handling personally identifiable, financial, procurement and proprietary data.

Questions for the Record from Senator Steve Daines

Question 1: Ms. Pierce, if confirmed to be Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Energy, do you commit to upholding the highest standards of fiduciary responsibility in managing the funds that Congress has entrusted to the Department of Energy while ensuring transparency and accountability?

Response: If confirmed, I will approach the role of CFO with a deep sense of duty to be a responsible steward of taxpayer resources entrusted to the Department of Energy and to following the law.

Questions for the Record from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: A November 2024 report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the Department of Energy (DOE) has a record of inadequate contract management. From your perspective, are there ways that the Department and Congress can work together to streamline information sharing and improve the reliability of information for contracted projects – while still upholding security measures?

Response: If confirmed, one of my priorities will be to work with the DOE Office of Management and other relevant DOE officials to ensure contracts and agreements are sound and complete before taxpayer funds are disbursed. Responsible fiscal stewardship means protecting

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Ms. Tina Pierce**

taxpayer dollars at every stage – from contract design to final execution – I want that discipline embedded across all of the DOE’s financial contracting activities.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Conner Prochaska

Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: Mr. Prochaska, as long as the Department of Energy extends a hiring freeze, ARPA-E will be placed in a difficult position. Since program directors are hired on fixed terms of three to five years, some of them will cycle out without the ability to hire new program directors to come in and lead new projects.

If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure ARPA-E has the staff capacity to be able to continue taking on new advanced energy projects?

Response: ARPA-E's success depends on its ability to attract and retain top-tier technical talent to lead its programs. The agency's model is built around rotating program directors who bring deep expertise and perspective to breakthrough energy challenges. If confirmed, I will prioritize maintaining a strong pipeline of qualified, mission-driven professionals to ensure consistent leadership and continuity across our project portfolio.

Question 2: Mr. Prochaska, many of the technical innovations that ARPA-E helps bring to market derive from science done by the national labs.

In your view, how should ARPA-E and the national labs best coordinate to maximize the impact of the technology the national labs are building?

Response: I believe there is a tremendous opportunity to deepen coordination between ARPA-E and the national laboratories. The labs are home to some of the most advanced scientific research in the world, and ARPA-E's role is to identify where that science can be translated into disruptive, commercially relevant technologies. I see value in leveraging lab infrastructure, talent and testbeds to support ARPA-E funded projects, while maintaining ARPA-E's independence in project selection and management. The key is to view ARPA-E and the labs as complementary forces, each with a distinct role and a shared mission to drive U.S. energy leadership through innovation.

Question 3: Mr. Prochaska, if confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that ARPA-E spends all of the funds that Congress has appropriated for the agency?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to ensuring ARPA-E funds are used effectively in support of the agency's mission and following the law.

Questions for the Record from Senator Steve Daines

Question 1: Mr. Prochaska, if confirmed to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy for the Department of Energy, will you commit to working with Congress to ensure that ARPA-E's unique position continues to drive energy innovation and leads the development of critical and emerging technologies that secure American leadership?

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Conner Prochaska**

Response: If confirmed, I commit to ensuring ARPA-E continues to fulfill its unique and vital role in the Department's innovation ecosystem. I will work to collaborate with Congress and preserve and strengthen the mission by advancing critical and emerging technologies that enhance U.S. competitiveness, energy security and economic resilience.

Questions for the Record from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: Can you please expand on the responses you provided during the hearing regarding an all-of-the-above energy approach? And how would you personally define President Trump and his Administration's term - "Green New Scam"?

Response: I appreciate the opportunity to clarify my views. I believe that an all-of-the-above energy strategy means pursuing a diverse mix of energy sources to ensure our nation's energy security, economic strength, and global competitiveness. It reflects a pragmatic recognition that increasing the availability of affordable, reliable and secure energy is essential to our country's economic and physical security. As the nominee for ARPA-E, my focus would be identifying high-potential technologies that can fundamentally change how we produce, store and use energy.

Question 2: Based on your previous experiences at ARPA-E, are there steps that the U.S. can take to further solidify itself in both the discovery and commercialization of new technologies – like quantum computing and AI?

Response: I believe the U.S. has a strong foundation in both discovery and early-stage development of technologies like quantum computing and artificial intelligence – but maintaining leadership will require continued and deliberate efforts across several fronts. We must also have strong public-private pathways that accelerate the transition from discovery to deployment. That means fostering collaborative testbeds, demonstration programs and derisking emerging technologies and attracting private sector capital at the right time.

Questions for the Record from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: This week, House Republicans are debating and considering a disastrous reconciliation bill that would create chaos for the energy industry by terminating tax credits, defunding agencies, and crippling domestic manufacturing.

Do you believe the House reconciliation bill will help or hurt your ability to fulfill ARPA-E's mission to accelerate the commercialization of new energy technologies?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure ARPA-E continues to deliver strong returns on investment for the American people. Before any funding is awarded, ARPA-E rigorously vets each project for technical merit, commercial potential, and in alignment with national priorities. We will hold awardees accountable through defined milestones, regular evaluations, and go, no-go decision points. This approach ensures that taxpayer dollars are directed toward efforts that demonstrate clear promise and performance. I will always work to maximize impact with the

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Mr. Conner Prochaska

resources provided and ensure ARPA-E takes smart risks to deliver the energy breakthroughs for our nation's needs.

Question 2: Department of Energy research has been credited with helping to enable the gas shale revolution. That small investment in research easily paid for itself in economic and national security benefits from the US gas industry.

Do you agree, just as we did for early oil and gas research, that we need to continue funding support for new energy sources now, such as geothermal and other cleaner sources, and that pulling back would be harmful for our economic and national security?

Response: The DOE's early investment in technologies that enabled the shale gas revolution are a powerful example of how targeted public research can yield enormous economic and national security benefits. I believe we face a similar opportunity today with emerging energy sources like geothermal, long-duration storage, advanced nuclear and other technologies. These areas hold tremendous promises to enhance grid reliability, and increase the availability of affordable, reliable and secure energy.

Question 3: ARPA-E was designed to catalyze transformational energy technologies and accelerate commercialization. The agency has helped many companies, including Colorado companies, that leverage early ARPA-E support to raise private capital to commercialize groundbreaking new technologies.

ARPA-E's SCALEUP program is designed to help the most promising projects transition from proof-of-concept to deployment. What is your view on the role of SCALEUP in ARPA-E's mission and how would you evaluate its success to date?

Response: I believe it's essential that ARPA-E remain focused on its core mission: supporting asymmetric, risk-return profile technologies that are too early-stage or too technically uncertain for traditional private investment. That mission is what makes ARPA-E unique and valuable to the innovation ecosystem. SCALEUP provides an opportunity to give promising projects the support to manage the so called "valley of death". However, ARPA-E should be vigilant to ensure that projects do not develop long-term dependence on government funding. It is important any programs, like SCALEUP or others, remain aligned with ARPA-E's charter – supporting only those technologies that have demonstrated exceptional technical promise through a rigorous, merit-based process, and where limited federal support can help overcome defined technical or scale-related barriers.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula**

Questions for the Record from Ranking Member Martin Heinrich

Question 1: The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) should be a nonpartisan science agency. I would like specific answers to each question below.

- How will you work to preserve the scientific integrity and independence of the U.S. Geological Survey's work and deliver unbiased scientific findings to the public?
- What specific steps will you take to ensure that scientific integrity is protected across the USGS?

Response: As a scientist, I have a deep understanding of the importance of scientific integrity as a basis for sound decision making. If confirmed, I commit to working with my colleagues within the Survey to ensure that appropriate scientific integrity policies are in place and adhered to so that the Survey is a source of objective scientific information.

Question 2: The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) plays a critical role in monitoring wildfire conditions in the West. During active fires, it provides real-time satellite and commercial data to the National Interagency Fire Center for use by frontline firefighters. After fires, USGS assesses burned areas to identify risks like landslides and other hazards. The President's proposed budget for FY2026 cuts USGS funding by \$564 million.

If confirmed, what would you do to make sure these activities, which are crucial for public safety, remain supported at USGS?

Response: I know the USGS plays a role with other agencies in monitoring wildfire and providing data and tools to land managers to respond to a variety of wildfire issues when they occur. I am not familiar with the details of the President's budget proposal, but if confirmed, I will be briefed on the proposal and work with this committee on this issue.

Question 3: The USGS plays an important part in monitoring and managing Chronic Wasting Disease. Chronic Wasting Disease is an untreatable disease found in deer, elk, and moose that is always fatal. It has been detected in 34 states, including New Mexico.

If confirmed, how will you ensure that critical USGS research and monitoring of Chronic Wasting Disease continues, so that hunters—many of whom hunt to feed their families—can trust that their local deer and elk populations are not at risk?

Response: I understand Chronic Wasting Disease is a threat to species central to big game hunting in your state and in many states across the country. If confirmed, I commit to learning more about this issue and the role the Survey and other bureaus may play in supporting efforts to address it.

Question 4: New Mexico has been facing wildfire, drought, flood, and extreme temperatures that devastate families and communities, stress our water supplies, and challenge our recreational tourism industry. USGS science highlights that more frequent extremes are in New Mexico's

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula**

future and that adaptation will increase our resilience to and lessen future costs of these events. Through partnerships with universities, Tribes, and tribal organizations, the USGS has brought adaptation solutions to New Mexico and every other state and territory of the U.S. through the National and Regional Climate Adaptation Science Centers, or CASCs. However, three CASCs—the Northeast CASC, Pacific Islands CASC, and South Central CASC, which serves New Mexico—have not been renewed by the USGS yet, even though funding was appropriated in FY2025. Congress specifically directed “the USGS to prioritize the funding needs of the Regional Centers [CASCs] and expedite the processing of funds to university-led consortia.” The CASCs have bipartisan and bicameral support from Congress, with the expectation that the openly competed and scientifically reviewed “rebid proposals” to host these three CASCs would be approved and funded by USGS in March or April 2025. I would like specific answers to each question below.

- When do you expect a decision to be made and funding sent to the USGS-selected consortia?
- What is the process to ensure there is no funding lapse when current funding ends on July 31, 2025?
- How will you ensure that USGS employees who oversee the CASCs, provide scientific leadership and support, and manage the critical data and metadata of hundreds of CASC projects are not fired, even though Congress provided FY25 funding with the intent for the CASCs to produce “critical actionable science that is invaluable to stakeholders, rights holders, and policy makers”?

Response: As I stated at my hearing, I have great respect for the scientists at the USGS and for the collaborative work that is done across the nation. However, as I am not currently at the Department, I am not familiar with, nor can I speculate on, the particular decisions or processes that you are referencing. If I am confirmed, I can commit to working closely with the scientists at the USGS to implement the agency’s mission responsibilities in accordance with law.

Question 5: The USGS Ecosystems mission area provides essential research and data collection to support America’s conservation efforts, and helps ensure that we have a strong foundation in science for programs that significantly benefit people and wildlife nationwide. Longstanding initiatives under the Species Management Research Program, such as the Bird Banding Lab and Breeding Bird Survey, support long-term data collection to better understand population trends and abundance, helping target conservation work to focus on the highest priorities for efficient use of funding, while supporting recreational activities such as birding, hunting, fishing, and their substantial economic impact. Birding alone contributes \$279 billion in economic output annually, and supports 1.4 million jobs. These efforts improve wildlife management, reduce conflicts, and benefit businesses, including data that can help support faster recovery and delisting species when appropriate.

If confirmed, will you support and advocate for the funding, staff, and programs under the USGS Ecosystems mission area, and the critical scientific efforts undertaken by this mission area?

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula

Response: I agree that conservation programs are among those that benefit from a strong scientific foundation. If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the Administration's proposed budget in depth and to ensuring that the science programs that serve the core mission of the Survey have the resources and staffing needed to effectively and efficiently deliver on behalf of the American public.

Question 6: Dr. Mamula, the President's proposed budget for FY2026 cuts USGS funding by \$564 million. It is my understanding that the Ecosystems Mission Area would take the most cuts in funding. It is also my understanding that over 1,000 USGS employees doing this work may be terminated – this is deeply troubling. USGS Ecosystems research is at the foundation of the tough decisions that Federal, State, and Tribal resource managers must make on a daily basis. USGS scientists develop locally relevant, user-driven scientific information, data, and tools that help managers detect and eradicate invasive species, improve species and habitat resilience to natural hazards, such as floods and wildfires, and ensure the resilience of multiple land uses, such as energy development, hunting and fishing, and outdoor recreation, to extreme events. Dr. Mamula, you testified that, if confirmed, you will examine each proposed budget cut at USGS to determine whether the cut is deserved. I would like specific answers to each question below.

- If confirmed, do you believe the proposed funding reduction for USGS is warranted?

- If not, will you advocate for continued funding and staffing?

- If confirmed, will you ensure that massive terminations and program closures are not carried out in advance of Congressional appropriations?

- If confirmed, will you ensure that any actions taken at the USGS are in accordance with the law and the Impoundment Control Act?

Response: As I noted at my hearing, I am not currently at the Department and am not familiar with the specific funding and staffing issues that you have identified. Consequently, it would be premature for me to provide my opinion on these issues. With respect to your remaining questions, if I am confirmed, I commit to working closely with the Department's legal team to ensure the actions I take as Director of the USGS are lawful.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula**

Questions for the Record from Senator Steve Daines

Question 1: Dr. Mamula, as you know, energy and mineral security is national security. If confirmed to be Director of the U.S. Geological Survey for the Department of the Interior, will you commit to work with Congress to uphold key USGS mission areas and promote domestic mining and mineral production?

Response: Yes. If confirmed, this commitment will likely be a number one priority because it fulfills USGS' responsibility to help strengthen U.S. national security *and* because it upholds the USGS Organic Act under which the agency was established.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula

Questions for the Record from Senator Mazie Hirono

Question 1: The USGS currently has 5 mission areas. Do you believe all 5 mission areas are important? If confirmed, will you ensure that all 5 mission areas are carried out with adequate resources? If not, what is your justification for eliminating mission areas and how will those gaps be filled?

Response: As a scientist and a former employee of the Survey, I strongly support the mission of the Survey as provided by the USGS Organic Act. If confirmed, I will ensure that the Survey continues to produce and deliver to decision makers the critical science necessary to meet the needs of our nation.

Question 2: If confirmed, will you commit to following the law and dispersing 100% of the funding appropriated by Congress for the USGS?

Response: If I am confirmed, I commit to following the law.

Question 3: Last month, an email was sent by the USGS to its employees stating that the department is planning for reductions-in-force, while exempting positions that are considered high-priority and public safety critical from being cut.

What percentage of jobs within the USGS are high priority and public safety critical? Do these jobs include employees who serve rural and remote communities in Hawaii and the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands? If so, will you commit to keeping these jobs from being cut? If not, how will you ensure that the critical services currently provided by the USGS will continue for these rural and remote communities?

Response: I am not yet at the Department and therefore cannot speculate on current staffing issues, but if confirmed, I commit to ensuring the critical services provided by the Survey are available to communities in your state and throughout the country and that they are delivered effectively and efficiently.

Question 4: The current policy at the Department is that Secretary Burgum must provide additional review of all awards above \$100,000. Three USGS CASC 5-year rebid proposals, including the Pacific Islands program, were submitted in February, have been reviewed by USGS, and are sitting on the Secretary's desk. Additionally, FY25 funding for all CASCs is currently being withheld by the Department. In the absence of timely funding, faculty, staff, and supported students will have to be furloughed beginning this summer.

If confirmed, will you see that these proposals are quickly reviewed by the Secretary and that the FY25 funds are released?

Response: Again, I am not at the Department and am not familiar with the funding issues that you are raising. However, I can assure you that, if I am confirmed, I will look into these issues.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula**

Questions for the Record Submitted from Senator Catherine Cortez Masto

Question 1: Mr. Mamula, do you believe that it is important to study the patterns of natural phenomena like drought and wildfire?

Follow-up: Do you believe that the USGS has a role in helping better our understanding of how to live with the challenges that our environment provides us?

Response: The Survey indeed has a critical role to meet our nation's natural hazard and ecosystem challenges, particularly given the recent explosion of demand for energy resources, critical minerals, rare earth elements, and technology metals. Geologic mapping, discovery of energy and mineral resources and inventorying other products continue to be important to our nation, and if confirmed, I look forward to leading this preeminent scientific agency.

**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula**

Questions for the Record from Senator John W. Hickenlooper

Question 1: USGS scientists manage crucial long-term datasets on water supply and quality, with thousands of monitoring sites across the country. These employees provide expert analysis of water availability by integrating satellite data and field measurements – turning that raw science into the analysis that guides reservoir management and water planning.

USGS water-focused science is key for us in Colorado and the drought-prone West. Severe staffing cuts at USGS threaten that essential work and the integrity of maintaining those long-term data resources. The President’s Budget request proposes to slash USGS’s budget by over a third.

How do you plan to ensure that USGS continues to deliver the critical water science we depend on, all while cutting staffing and funding?

Response: As I noted at my hearing, I am not currently at the Department and am not privy to details regarding funding and staffing. However, I recognize the importance of maintaining the critical data that the Survey has collected and will continue to collect on many resources, including water. If confirmed, I will conduct a thorough review of the Survey to ensure that we have the tools and resources necessary to meet the Survey’s core mission as one of the Nation’s preeminent science agencies.

Question 2: The Earth MRI program at USGS is a vital mapping program that we need to address our critical mineral needs as well as rebuild our skilled geoscience workforce.

In just five years, Earth MRI has quadrupled our geophysical mapping data coverage and has identified new critical mineral resources all over the U.S.

Will you ensure that USGS maintains the robust support, staffing, and funding that Earth MRI needs to continue this work?

Response: As I stated at my hearing, the Survey’s mapping programs are a key element necessary to meet the Nation’s urgent need for domestic energy and mineral security. If confirmed, I will conduct a thorough review of the Survey to ensure that we have the tools and resources necessary to meet the core mission of one of the Nation’s preeminent science agencies, including the Earth MRI Program.

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula

Questions for the Record from Senator Alex Padilla

Question 1: Dr. Mamula, USGS is not a mining agency, but rather our nation's premier scientific institution on everything from earthquakes and water to biodiversity and climate change. Can you commit that if confirmed, USGS won't become a glorified mining agency?

Response: As I stated at my hearing, USGS is one the oldest and most storied of our federal agencies. If confirmed, I commit to following the law while leading one of our Nation's preeminent scientific agencies, and to implement its responsibility to provide quality scientific information to the public and to decision makers.

Question 2: Are you committed to unequivocally supporting USGS's critical work on climate science, water systems, ecosystems, and other natural hazards?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to supporting the critical work of the Survey in accordance with the law.

Question 3: You have spent a significant portion of your career focused on resource extraction. How exactly will you build trust with the career scientists at USGS, many of whom have dedicated their lives to studying things like groundwater mapping, wildfire modeling, and endangered species management?

Response: I have great respect for the scientists at the Survey, many of whom I have associated with over my career. If confirmed, I will bring my experiences and enthusiasm for science and will dedicate myself to work collaboratively with my colleagues at the Survey to meet the mission requirements of this critical scientific agency.

Question 4: Do you support mining within National Parks?

Question 5: Do you think USGS should be participating in assessments that could open the door to mining in National Parks?

Question 6: Is there any policy justification for industrial mining within a unit of the National Park System?

Response to Questions 4-6: Although I appreciate the beauty and importance of our national parks, if I am confirmed as Director of the USGS, I will not be in a position to make decisions regarding the management of parks. Rather, I will ensure that the USGS fulfills its core missions, including classifying lands and mapping their geological structure, energy and mineral wealth, and other endowments. I further commit to ensuring this scientific information will be provided to the Secretary and other decisionmakers clearly and accurately.

Question 7: How will you ensure that USGS's science won't be used to greenlight mining projects near tribal sacred sites, national monuments, wilderness, or other protected landscapes?

U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
May 14, 2025 Hearing: The Brightbill, Pierce, Prochaska and Mamula Nominations
Questions for the Record Submitted to Dr. Ned Mamula

Response: As noted above, the mission of the USGS is to evaluate and provide quality scientific information about our public lands and resources to the public and decision makers. If confirmed, my role will be to ensure that the USGS meets its mission requirements, which do not include making land use decisions.

Question 8: USGS partners with Tribes to study cultural landscapes. Are you committed to honoring Tribal sovereignty, particularly where mining proposals overlap with sacred lands?

Response: I recognize the importance of honoring Tribal sovereignty and the nation-to-nation relationship between the Federal government and Tribes. However, as noted above, if confirmed, my role will be to ensure that the USGS meets its core mission requirements, not to make land use decisions.

Question 9: If confirmed, you would be responsible for overseeing vital efforts to monitor and prepare for natural disasters, such as earthquakes. Earthquakes, which are a matter of “when” not “if,” pose an increasing threat to our communities, and USGS partnership on the ShakeAlert program is critical to California and other West Coast states’ efforts to protect our communities from earthquakes and minimize the damage they cause. Will you commit to continuing USGS’s partnerships with state entities and universities on programs, like ShakeAlert, that underpin our nation’s earthquake preparedness?

Response: If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that the Survey continues to conduct research, monitoring and assessment activities related to natural disasters, including earthquakes, in accordance with law. And, as I stated at my hearing, I believe that collaborations between scientists are a fundamental element of the research process and will continue to support such collaborations, if confirmed.

Question 10: What plans do you have to ensure that USGS continues to improve and expand its efforts to prepare and protect our communities from earthquakes?

Response: If confirmed, I intend to take a hard look at the programs and missions of the Survey to ensure that we are continuing to provide reliable scientific assessments as required by law. In those instances where our programs and data can be improved, I will seek to implement those improvements.

May 12, 2025

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, and Members of the Committee:

We, the undersigned organizations, write in strong support of the nomination of Conner Prochaska to serve as the next Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy (ARPA-E). Mr. Prochaska brings a unique combination of leadership, technical depth, and strategic vision that will serve ARPA-E—and the nation—exceptionally well in this role.

Mr. Prochaska has built a career dedicated to advancing innovative energy solutions, including during his prior leadership at ARPA-E and the Department of Energy. He understands the vital importance of marrying early-stage R&D with real-world deployment, and he brings a pragmatic approach to bridging science and commercialization. His leadership will help ensure ARPA-E remains a hub for breakthrough energy technologies that enhance grid reliability, lower emissions, and strengthen American competitiveness.

As a mix of past awardees of the ARPA-E program and strong organizational supporters of its work, the undersigned organizations have witnessed Mr. Prochaska's mastery of commercializing innovative technologies. His deep understanding of both technical and policy landscapes makes him uniquely suited to lead ARPA-E at a moment when global competition and domestic demand for energy innovation are intensifying.

We urge the Committee to swiftly confirm Mr. Prochaska's nomination. His return to ARPA-E would ensure that the agency continues to deliver transformative results in energy science and technology—results that matter for economic growth, national security and clean, affordable and reliable energy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

American Conservation Coalition
Antora Energy
AtmosZero
Brimstone
C3 Solutions
Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES)
Clean Energy Buyers Association
ClearPath Action
CO2EFFICIENT
Congruent Ventures

Conservative Texans for Energy Innovation
Emrgy
Equatic
Fervo Energy
Form Energy
Foundation for American Innovation (Thomas Hochman, Director of Infrastructure Policy)
Heirloom
Liquid Cooling Coalition
Nuclear Innovation Alliance
Oklo
Quaise Energy
Quidnet Energy
Rainey Center Freedom Project
Tandem PV
TerraPower
Thermal Battery Alliance
Third Way
Via Separations, Inc.



May 14, 2025

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chair
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
363 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
U.S. Senate
709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Lee and Heinrich,

On behalf of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA), I write to express our strong support for Dr. Ned Mamula's appointment as the new Director of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Dr. Mamula brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of America's mineral resources to this important role. His decades of service across government and academia have demonstrated a strong commitment to sound science, public service and the responsible stewardship of our nation's geological assets.

NSSGA is the leading advocate for the aggregates industry, which plays a vital role in building and maintaining our nation's infrastructure, supplying the materials that construct our roads, bridges and public works. The relationship between NSSGA and USGS has long been rooted in mutual respect and collaboration. Our industry depends on USGS's impartial, comprehensive and science-based data to help inform decisions on resource availability, land use planning and long-term infrastructure development.

We look forward to continuing this valuable partnership under Dr. Mamula's leadership. His expertise in domestic mineral policy and his consistent advocacy for strengthening America's resource independence align well with NSSGA's mission to support the production of aggregates essential to building and maintaining our nation's infrastructure.

We are confident that Dr. Mamula will bring strong leadership to the USGS and further strengthen the agency's role in providing the reliable data and research that industries like ours rely on daily. NSSGA stands ready to support his work and collaborate closely in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Michele Stanley
Interim CEO
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association

