



2026 NUCLEAR ENGINEERING STUDENT DELEGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. SEPTEMBER 21ST - 25TH

The Delegation supports revitalizing nuclear workforce development, education, and training through:

- Maintaining consistent, reliable appropriations and awards to universities and research reactors through funding opportunities like the [Nuclear Energy University Program](#), National Science Foundation, and the National Nuclear Talent Development Program.
- Expanding curriculum development grants such as those awarded as part of the [Nuclear Safety Training and Workforce Development Program](#) and outlined in [H.R. 8517](#), *Clean Energy Workforce Act*, to include K-12 outreach, skilled trades, and retraining programs for workers transitioning into the nuclear industry.
- Ensuring U.S. NRC talent retention through reforms such as [H.R. 9614](#), *NRC Staff Pay Alignment Act*, allowing for increased pay for critical positions not easily replaced.
- Incentivizing skilled trades careers in nuclear energy by expanding worker protections and transition programs as mentioned in [Sec. 10 of H.R. 6923](#), *Jobs for a Carbon Free Transportation System Act*.

The Delegation supports securing and modernizing the domestic nuclear fuel cycle through:

- Increasing domestic enrichment capacity by passing [S.5249](#), *MORE American Fuel Act*, and preserving the spirit of [H.R. 9612](#), *American Enrichment Deployment Act*.
- Ensuring appropriations in line with previous funding to support domestic strategic isotope production beyond 2027 under DOE [budget line Isotope R&D and Production](#).
- Streamlining used nuclear fuel reprocessing through [H.R. 3978/S. 2082](#), *REFUEL Act*, and assessing further recycling efforts per [H.R. 9197/S. 3016](#), *Advancing Research in Nuclear Fuel Recycling Act*.
- Advancing [H.R. 10143/S. 5233](#), *Jobs, Not Waste Act of 2026*, together with [H.R. 466/S. 101](#), *Nuclear Waste Informed Consent Act*, with the intention of enabling alternative repository pathways and establishing a consent-based framework for future permanent nuclear fuel disposal.

The Delegation supports strengthening financial infrastructure and nuclear export coordination through:

- Making IRS Investment Tax Credit normalization optional through [H.R. 8482](#), *Nuclear Rate Stabilization Act*, and aligning the treatment of the § 48E Clean Electricity Investment Credit with production tax credits through [H.R. 6474](#), *Parity for Nuclear Energy Investment Act*, to incentivize nuclear investment.
- Appropriating credit subsidies for DOE loan guarantees directed towards advanced reactors.
- Increasing the Tennessee Valley Authority's statutory borrowing authority, last set in 1979, to support energy infrastructure projects in one of America's fastest growing regions.
- Facilitating U.S. technology exports by reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank per [S. 3772](#), *Export-Import Bank Reauthorization Act of 2026*.
- Supporting U.S. international nuclear policy and investment through [H.R.1474](#), *International Nuclear Energy Financing Act*, and [S.5063](#), *FIRST Act*.

The Delegation supports deployment, licensing, and regulation of advanced nuclear technologies through:

- Streamlining NRC licensing processes by eliminating unrequested public hearings through [H.R. 5549/S.1757](#), *Efficient Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act*.
- Enforcing the rapid dissemination of safety standard alterations at DOE facilities and authorizations for new nuclear facilities according to [H.R. 9084](#), *Department of Energy Nuclear Transparency Act*.
- Investigating methods and imposing regulations for the proper use of artificial intelligence in reactor technologies through [H.R. 9965](#), *AI Threat Output and Monitoring Incident Containment Act*.
- Passing [H.R. 9193](#), *Powering the Future of American Space Dominance Act*, to continue developing nuclear systems for critical manned and unmanned space missions.

2026 Nuclear Engineering Student Delegation

Hayden Bland (Chair)	North Carolina State University
Audrey Miles (Vice Chair)	University of California, Irvine
Logan Burnett (Vice Chair)	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Neal Goturi	Cornell University
Drew Hanson	University of South Carolina
Cecilia Harrison	North Carolina State University
Shelby Hobohm	University of Texas at Austin
Christopher Leffler	Virginia Commonwealth University
Jaden Palmer	North Carolina State University
Eleanor Rouswell	University of Oklahoma
Matthew Salek	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Pavel Shilenko	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Tivon Straub	Missouri University of Science and Technology
Krishna Sunder	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Sam Woolsey	Georgia Institute of Technology

About the NESD

In 1994, the first Nuclear Engineering Student Delegation (NESD) convened in Washington, D.C. to reinstate funding for research reactors. Today, the Delegation continues to express the views of students on nuclear science, policy, and education issues. Each year, the Delegation comprises a diverse group of students from the nation's most prestigious nuclear engineering programs, representing various disciplines within the nuclear sciences.

For further information on the 2026 NESD or the policy recommendations in this document, please contact Hayden Bland at hsbland@ncsu.edu or visit the NESD website at <https://www.nesd.org>.

Revitalizing Nuclear Workforce Development, Education, and Training

The workforce supporting nuclear projects in the U.S. must keep pace with the rapidly growing need for further deployment of nuclear power. Reliable research and development funding is crucial to support advanced degrees in nuclear-related fields. The DOE's proposed reductions in [University and Competitive Research Programs](#) funding, such as the National Nuclear Talent Development Program (NNTDP) and Technology Commercialization Fund (TCF) grants, will weaken the workforce pipeline. We encourage specific appropriations, reliable submission timelines, and timely awards to programs including NNTDP and [Infrastructure Revitalization Funding](#) grants. The trades workforce is also a vital component of nuclear project development; for example, the recent construction of Plant Vogtle in Georgia was hindered by a stunted domestic workforce. The Delegation applauds recent awards made through the [Nuclear Safety Training and Workforce Development Program](#) supporting collaborations with universities to equip workers with nuclear certifications. We recommend expanded awards in the upcoming cycle to include K-12 curriculum development grants, similar to [H.R. 8517, Clean Energy Workforce Act](#).

Additionally, some of the most crucial roles for nuclear innovation are also the least incentivized. It is important that the NRC be adequately staffed to address incoming license applications and to prevent the loss of institutional knowledge. [H.R. 9614, NRC Staff Pay Alignment Act](#), provides for NRC Senior Executive Service Positions to be paid up to 110% of the maximum annual rate of basic pay, which will decrease attrition. Scarcity in skilled workers such as pipefitters, welders, and electricians is addressed by programs like those in Sec. 10 of [H.R. 6923, Jobs for a Carbon Free Transportation System Act](#), which would create pathways for displaced energy sector workers to transition into sustainable energy industries. The Delegation recommends that these programs include nuclear industries as eligible careers. The Delegation also supports stable labor-management relations in the nuclear industry through efforts like [H.R. 5408, Faster Labor Contracts Act](#), and [H.R. 5761, Fair Warning Act](#). These incentives for nuclear-related fields attract and retain a strong nuclear workforce.

Securing and Modernizing the Domestic Nuclear Fuel Cycle

A secure nuclear fuel supply is essential to sustain the existing U.S. reactor fleet and support advanced reactors, isotope production, and nuclear research. Continued dependence on foreign uranium creates geopolitical vulnerabilities and constrains future nuclear deployment, as the U.S. currently only has the capacity to support [5%](#) of its annual uranium demands domestically. Strengthening domestic and allied capacity for Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) and High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HALEU) is necessary to support current reactor development. [H.R. 9612, American Enrichment Deployment Act](#), strengthens the domestic fuel supply chain by modernizing uranium enrichment facility licensing to reduce deployment delays, and [S. 5249, MORE American Fuel Act](#), accomplishes the same while maintaining regulatory oversight. Alongside the establishment of a domestic fuel supply chain, it is equally vital to ensure the domestic production of strategic isotopes, many of which are currently imported from foreign nations. Appropriations for isotopes, which currently expire in 2027, per [budget line Isotope R&D and Production](#), must be renewed.

Used nuclear fuel storage and reprocessing capacity depends on the modernization of regulatory policy. Qualified reprocessing facilities would benefit from streamlined site licensing regulations as supported by [H.R. 3978/S. 2082, Nuclear REFUEL Act](#). Similarly, [H.R. 9197/S. 3016, Advancing Research in Nuclear Fuel Recycling Act](#), would direct the DOE to evaluate new technologies and opportunities for recycling used fuel. These efforts should be accompanied by reform of the nation's long-term waste-management framework. [S. 5233/H.R. 10143, Jobs, Not Waste Act of 2026](#), would eliminate a major barrier to establishing alternative storage sites to Yucca Mountain. [H.R. 466/S. 101, Nuclear Waste Informed Consent Act](#), would require affected state and local consent before Nuclear Waste Fund expenditures are made for a repository. Finally, the DOE Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus initiative could attract significant commercial investment in closing the fuel cycle

via federal partnerships that mitigate risk while maintaining economic incentives. Together, these measures would advance federal policy while establishing a consent-based process for future permanent nuclear waste disposal.

Strengthening Financial Infrastructure and International Nuclear Export Coordination

Federal tax policy can support further investment and strengthen the domestic manufacturing base. [H.R. 8482](#), *Nuclear Rate Stabilization Act*, would modify the § 48E Clean Electricity Investment Credit to allow nuclear facilities greater flexibility in utilizing tax benefits during construction. Aligning with current treatment of production tax credits, [H.R. 6474](#), *Parity for Nuclear Energy Investment Act*, would also allow nuclear projects claiming the § 48E Clean Electricity Investment Credit to receive a bonus incentive if located in a “nuclear energy community.” Similarly, expanding the § 45X Advanced Manufacturing Production Credit to nuclear components would further strengthen domestic nuclear manufacturing and the supply chain needed to support repeatable deployment of advanced reactors.

Effective financing programs are essential to the success of complex nuclear infrastructure, especially for first-of-a-kind advanced reactors. Appropriating credit subsidies for DOE loan guarantees directed specifically towards small modular reactors and non-light water reactors would facilitate private investment. We also support de-risking mechanisms such as [S. 3814](#), *Accelerating Reliable Capacity Act of 2026*, which would enhance federal support for advanced nuclear projects receiving DOE loan guarantees, reducing construction risk. Finally, the Delegation recommends amending the [Tennessee Valley Authority \(TVA\) Act of 1933](#) (16 U.S.C. § 831n-4) to increase the TVA’s statutory borrowing authority—which has not been increased since 1979—to accommodate projected growth in electricity demand and investment.

The United States should capture the economic and strategic value of a growing global nuclear market by ensuring American technologies are competitive abroad. The reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank per [S. 3772](#), *Export-Import Bank Reauthorization Act of 2026*, would facilitate the export of American technologies. Without this, the authorization for the Export-Import Bank would lapse after December 31, 2026. Additionally, we support greater U.S. engagement with international financial institutions through [H.R. 1474](#), *International Nuclear Energy Financing Act of 2025*, which is a coordinated U.S. strategy for nuclear cooperation. In parallel, the Delegation supports the codification of existing pathways for international development by leveraging U.S. expertise in small modular reactors through [S. 5063](#), *FIRST Act*.

Streamlining the Licensing, Regulation, and Deployment of Advanced Nuclear Technologies

Growing demand for nuclear technology across new sectors, requires updated regulations aimed at increasing speed and reducing industry costs while maintaining public trust. [H.R. 5549/S. 1757](#), *Effective Nuclear Licensing Hearings Act*, streamlines the regulation and information-dissemination process for reactor technology and nuclear facilities by eliminating mandatory but unrequested public hearings. The Delegation applauds the DOE’s innovative Reactor Pilot Program’s work in accordance with [E.O. 14301](#), and supports the announcements of alterations to DOE safety standards and authorizations of DOE facilities in [H.R. 9084](#), *Department of Energy Nuclear Transparency Act*.

A variety of cutting-edge nuclear technologies can grow American industry and accomplish national security objectives; however, they must be properly implemented. Understanding the risk scenarios of AI methods in nuclear science is crucial to maintaining trust in the applications of these two intersecting technologies when deployed. The Delegation recognizes that recent advances in AI applications may incur these risks and supports investigating how to regulate their applications in nuclear science and technology under [H.R. 9965](#), *AI Threat Output and Monitoring Incident Containment Act*. Enacting [H.R. 9193](#), *Powering the Future of American Space Dominance Act*, would resolve programmatic issues and introduce a clear plan for delivering technology and accomplishing critical space objectives that can only be enabled by nuclear power.