

US DOE Selects Five States to Explore Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses

The US Department of Energy (DOE) announced July 28 that it has selected Idaho, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Utah as potential host states for Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses, a new initiative intended to strengthen and modernize the nation's nuclear fuel cycle while expanding domestic nuclear manufacturing and infrastructure. DOE has signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the five states following a competitive process that attracted 28 applications from 26 states, which have not been disclosed. The agreements allow DOE and the states to continue evaluating opportunities to establish the campuses, which are expected to support activities spanning the entire nuclear fuel cycle. DOE reportedly will select three states from the five finalists by the end of this year.

According to DOE, the proposed campuses could support fabrication, uranium enrichment, spent nuclear fuel reprocessing, and final disposition of spent nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive waste. Depending on each state's priorities and capabilities, campuses could also include advanced reactor deployment, power generation, advanced manufacturing, and co-located data centers.

Secretary of Energy Chris Wright said the campuses are intended to help restore the domestic nuclear fuel cycle and expand the US nuclear industry, stating, "The campuses will be massive generators of economic growth, create thousands of high-paying jobs, and be crucial to unleashing America's nuclear renaissance."

DOE estimates that each campus could attract up to \$50 billion in capital investment, generate as much as \$10 billion in state and local tax revenue, and create nearly 25,000 jobs.

The selected states emphasized their existing nuclear capabilities and interest in expanding their roles in the industry.

Utah Governor Spencer J. Cox said the state is developing the full nuclear lifecycle through its Operation Gigawatt initiative, including fuel production and advanced reactor deployment.

Tennessee Governor Bill Lee highlighted the state's long

history in the nuclear sector, including its role in the Manhattan Project, while Oklahoma Governor J. Kevin Stitt said the initiative would build on the state's longstanding leadership in energy production by adding nuclear energy to its portfolio.

Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry said the state shares the Administration's vision for expanding nuclear power and is prepared to support the phase of nuclear energy development. Local news reported that Louisiana's plan includes offshore nuclear waste storage in the Gulf of Mexico by injecting the waste into an underwater layer called a salt dome. Citing the state's application, the news story said that storing waste three miles offshore could allow companies to bypass state laws that restrict storing radioactive waste in salt domes.

Idaho Governor Brad Little pointed to the state's more than 70-year history of nuclear research and innovation, saying Idaho is well positioned to support every stage of the nuclear fuel cycle.

DOE invited states to submit statements of interest earlier this year, requesting proposals describing how Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses could support workforce development, infrastructure investment, economic diversification,

and technology leadership (SF No 1597 January 30, 2026). States submitted applications by April 1, 2026.

The initiative is part of the Trump administration's broader effort to reestablish US leadership in nuclear energy under a series of Executive Orders signed on May 23, 2025. Through the Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campuses, DOE aims to create integrated nuclear ecosystems capable of supporting the entire fuel cycle while also accommodating advanced reactor deployment, power generation, advanced manufacturing, and co-located data centers where appropriate.

When DOE solicited state interest earlier this year, it asked applicants to outline how a campus would advance priorities such as workforce development, infrastructure investment, economic diversification, and technology leadership. The



NUCLEAR LIFECYCLE INNOVATION CAMPUSES

How states are framing the opportunity

STATE	POSTURE	ECONOMIC PITCH
Idaho	Preserve and extend a long nuclear tradition; pro-growth and pro-federal partnership.	Affordable clean energy, a stronger economy, and advanced nuclear leadership.
Oklahoma	Cautious, study-first, test whether nuclear fits the state's mix.	Potential future feasibility; economics still being evaluated.
Utah	Most expansionist; explicit about becoming a nuclear hub.	Major job creation and investment, centered on Tooele County.
Tennessee	Most established industrial case, anchored at Oak Ridge.	Jobs and supply-chain growth through existing nuclear assets and continued federal and private investment.
Louisiana	Pro-nuclear and policy-forward; building a permitting framework before projects arrive.	Industrial-policy and energy-diversification strategy for readiness, not a specific campus bid.

The distinction that matters: Idaho, Utah, Tennessee, and Oklahoma are responding as candidate host sites, while Louisiana is a readiness case: preparing its policy ground rather than bidding for a campus.

Source: state governor releases on RFI, 2026. Postures summarized from public statements.

Department also sought proposals that emphasize private and state investment, with targeted and time-limited federal support, while incorporating robust financial assurances, environmental safeguards, and proliferation-resistant operations. DOE said the initiative is intended to strengthen US energy security, rebuild domestic nuclear capabilities, and enhance the nation's global leadership in nuclear energy.

The MOUs do not designate final campus locations. States that choose to continue pursuing the initiative are expected to negotiate hosting agreements with DOE at a later date.

Industry reaction

The announcement was welcomed by industry, with American Nuclear Society President Mark Peters commenting, "This is an important step in evaluating how the United States can strengthen its nuclear fuel cycle and expand domestic nuclear capabilities. ANS and its members stand ready to help state leaders and local communities address the technical questions ahead." ANS CEO Craig Piercy noted that a campus "Has the potential to advance two important national objectives: strengthening America's nuclear fuel infrastructure and improving long-term management options for used nuclear fuel. We are encouraged to see a cooperative, voluntary process involving the federal government, states, Tribal nations, local communities, and other stakeholders."

Nuclear waste disposal company, Deep Isolation, welcomed the initiative, pointing out in a press release that "its patented deep borehole disposal technology is particularly well suited to the campus model due to its modularity, scalability and adaptability to a very wide range of geologic settings. It supports disposal of used nuclear fuel from the United States' legacy fleet of light water reactors, from advanced reactor designs, and also of the highly radioactive residues that remain after recycling of the used nuclear fuel."

Ed McGinnis, CEO of Curio, which is working with federal agencies, national laboratories, universities, industry partners, and state governments to commercialize technologies that recycle spent fuel into valuable products, said, "Today, we have the opportunity to recognize UNF [used nuclear fuel] as a strategic national resource that not only solves the problem but produces valuable fuel and resources this country desperately needs."

Reaction from Members of Congress

Politico's *E&E News* reported July 30 that some members of Congress are cautiously optimistic about the initiative with Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chair Mike Lee (R-Utah) pointing out that Congress has to figure out what to do with Yucca Mountain, since legally, it is still designated as the sole site for the US federal repository. Lee said he'd "quite possibly" introduce legislation to enable that but did not elaborate further.

House Energy and Commerce Chair Brett Guthrie (R-

Industry Calendar

- August 2-6, 2026
INMM 67th Annual Meeting
<https://inmm.org/news/events/inmm-67th-annual-meeting>
JW Marriott Austin, Austin, TX
- August 2-5, 2026
US Women in Nuclear
<https://www.nei.org/conferences>
Hyatt Regency Seattle, Seattle, WA
- November 11-13
NEA Workshop on Reprocessing for Advanced Fuel Cycles
<https://oecd-nea.org/jcms/pl117176/recycling-for-advanced-fuel-cycles-supporting-sustainable-waste-management-solutions>
Daejeon, Korea
- November 15-18, 2026
ANS Winter Conference & Expo
<https://www.ans.org/meetings/wc2026>
Arizona Grand Resort & Spa, Phoenix, AZ
Details are available at:
<https://www.uxc.com/c/data-industry/Calendar.aspx>

Kentucky) provided a vague statement that simply said he would "continue working with the Trump Administration and the Department of Energy to usher in America's nuclear renaissance."

California Democrat Mike Levin, who co-chairs the Spent Nuclear Fuel Solutions Caucus, expressed concerns about the White House's push to restart the Nuclear Waste Fee, saying "we should be using the money already in the Nuclear Waste Fund before we talk about restarting a fee that courts previously halted."

In the Senate, John Kennedy (R-Louisiana), chair of the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, was even more cautious. He was quoted as saying, "I need to learn a lot more about it before I'm going to be supportive of the rest of the country dumping its nuclear waste on Louisiana."

Top Story

US NWTRB highlights key technical lessons learned from global geologic repository programs

In a July 24, 2026 letter to Mr. Theodore Garrish, Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy at the United States Department of Energy (DOE), the United States Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board (NWTRB or Board) summarized insights gained from international radioactive waste management leaders during its June 2026 meeting. As the United States enters the early stages of site selection through initiatives such as DOE's Nuclear Lifecycle Innovation Campus proposal, the Board evaluated lessons from six nations – the