



**NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION
PREVENTION PROJECT**

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CONTACT: Prof. Alan J. Kuperman
ak@NPPP.org

U.S. House of Representatives Votes to Continue Navy LEU Fuel R&D for 8th Year
Authorization and Appropriation Aim to Replace Bomb-Grade Fuel in Submarines

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA – As Australia’s new government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, considers how to implement his predecessor’s landmark 2021 AUKUS agreement, the U.S. Congress has voiced continued support for eliminating weapons-grade uranium fuel in nuclear submarines.

This week, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the FY 2023 defense bill, including an [authorization](#) that, “Provides \$20,000,000 in funding for the continued research and development of advanced naval nuclear fuel systems based on low-enriched uranium [LEU].” Three weeks prior, a House committee had approved an FY 2023 [appropriation](#) for the same amount, “to develop high-density, low-enriched fuels that could replace highly enriched uranium [HEU] for naval applications.” These provisions would continue the preceding year’s funding level; the U.S. Senate has yet to release its versions of the bills. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, making nuclear weapons is possible with HEU but not LEU.

Australia’s Defense Minister, Richard Marles, in a [speech](#) this week in Washington, DC, discussed AUKUS’s implementation, saying that, “In determining the optimal pathway forward, the Australian Government is acutely aware of the obligations of nuclear stewardship ... and ensuring this initiative sets the strongest possible non-proliferation standards.”

NPPP’s coordinator, Alan J. Kuperman, noted that current non-proliferation standards, which Australia strongly has supported, prohibit the export of even a few kilograms of HEU to new land-based nuclear reactors that can be inspected regularly. He added, “This makes obvious that the ‘strongest possible non-proliferation standards’ do not permit export of thousands of kilograms of HEU for submarine-based nuclear reactors that cannot be inspected regularly due to their stealthy underwater deployment – especially if an alternative, LEU fuel is feasible.”

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