



NRC NEWS

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**Edward McGaffigan, Jr., Commissioner
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission**

Acceptance Speech (In Absentia)

**American Nuclear Society / Nuclear Energy Institute
Henry DeWolf Smyth Nuclear Statesman Award**

**May 25, 2007
NEI's Nuclear Energy Assembly
Turnberry Isle, Florida**

Good morning. My name is Ed McGaffigan, and I am speaking to you from NRC headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, on May 15th, 2007. I regret that I am not able to be with you in Florida today to receive the Smyth Award personally. And I am deeply grateful to Chairman Klein for doing me the honor of receiving the award in my name.

I receive this award with great humility and gratitude. I am not sure that I am deserving of the honor, particularly given the roster of those who precede me, people I consider giants in the nuclear field, starting with Dr. Smyth himself. I might have grown to giant status had I been given a bit more time on this Earth. That does not make me less grateful for having received this award today.

I am deeply grateful to Chairman Klein for nominating me and to Admiral Bowman for supporting my candidacy. And I'm sure many others did as well. I am grateful for the recognition of a career of more than 31 years of service to this nation in which nuclear energy and nonproliferation policy have been my constant touchstones.

I started my service in 1976 as a young Foreign Service officer. I had the great opportunity to immediately work for George Vest, the State Department's political military director, who was chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group created after the Indian event. I went on to serve my former professor Joseph Nye during the Carter administration as he formulated nonproliferation policy for President Carter and then had a two-year tour in Embassy Moscow, where I was also responsible for nuclear energy and other energy matters on behalf of the embassy.

All through my thirteen and a half years working for Senator Jeff Bingaman, supporting his work on the Senate Armed Services Committee, nuclear issues were a constant focus. We worked closely with Senator Pete Domenici, a former recipient of this award and a true giant, and his staff. And I believe we achieved some important legislative successes.

Senator Bingaman recommended me to President Clinton in 1996 to serve on this Commission. Nils Diaz and I were confirmed the same day in early August of 1996. And NRC has been my home since.

I believe that we as a Commission have achieved great success during the time that I have

served on the Commission. And I am proud of those achievements. But they were collective achievements. Our dedication, the dedication of every Commissioner and every NRC staffer, was always to the public health and safety. The new Commissioners, however, had some strong views about how to reform various Commission processes and move away from the often undisciplined and unconstructive approach that had been documented in the Towers Perrin report.

Our reactor oversight process today is a model for objective assessment of licensee performance, and for transparency of information for the public, among all regulatory agencies in all disciplines worldwide. We met the challenge of license renewal, despite great doubts. We met the challenge of processing license transfers promptly so the industry could consolidate, and in my view grow significantly safer. We revised our hearing process consistent with the law to make it more efficient while still entirely fair to intervenors. We met the challenge of 9/11 more vigorously and promptly than any other federal agency. And we have been praised constantly by our fellow homeland security agencies for the vigor with which we approach the issue.

I am proud to have served with such a talented group of fellow Commissioners. And while I may be the first of my generation to receive the Smyth Award, my hope is others will follow and that our successors, led by Chairman Klein, will be able to build on our meager accomplishments while meeting the enormous challenge of human capital, which NRC currently faces as my generation retires, and the enormous upcoming work load, which NRC will also face.

I am grateful for this award. I am proud to receive it. I am humbled at the honor. I pray that our nation is wise enough to embrace the promise of safe and secure nuclear energy in the decades ahead. And I am sure that my successors as Commissioners and the truly, truly dedicated NRC staff will ensure the safe and secure use of nuclear energy throughout this nation's history.

Thank you very, very much. God bless.