

Statement of Kristine L. Svinicki
Commissioner, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Before the
Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
On
NRC's Licensing and Relicensing Process for Nuclear Plants

July 16, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Voinovich and Members of the Subcommittee. I would begin by taking this opportunity to thank each of you, and your fellow Senators, for supporting my confirmation and thereby making possible my inaugural appearance before you today as a Commissioner, along with my colleagues.

When I appeared before the full committee at my nomination hearing, I pledged to each of you that, if confirmed, I would immerse myself in the issues and challenges facing the agency and that I would commit myself fully to contributing to the continued success of the Commission. In the approximately three months since my swearing in, this has remained my commitment.

Fresh from my experiences as Senate committee staff, I was no stranger to long days, but since arriving at the Commission, I have never felt more keenly just how few hours there are in the day. Partly this is a result of my approach to addressing the ongoing work of the Commission, which is to research the last few years of Commission action and deliberation, and to set issues in a proper context before formulating my own view. I am assisted in this by an agency staff that is both highly skilled and highly eager to explain and debate its work. Their commitment to public service, as evidenced in the work they do, has impressed me deeply.

The NRC faces many challenges, already outlined by my colleagues, but none, in my view, are insurmountable. What success will require, however, is a sustained commitment to continual improvement in our processes and an eye always to safeguarding the trust that the public has resided in us. As I continue to develop my "sea legs" at the Commission, I intend to stay focused on both.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank publicly the three gentlemen seated alongside me here. To a person, my fellow Commissioners, and the Chairman, have been unfailingly gracious and supportive in easing my transition to the NRC and welcoming me to their ranks. They have been patient with my need to research the issues and come up to speed, and have extended every accommodation to me. I am grateful to each of them.

I thank the subcommittee for its enduring support of the important work of the NRC and for this opportunity to appear. I will endeavor to address any questions you may have.