

**Statement of Kristine L. Svinicki
Commissioner, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy and Power and the
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy**

Hearing on “The Role of the NRC in America’s Energy Future”

4 May 2011

Thank you, Chairmen Whitfield and Shimkus, Ranking Members Rush and Green, and members of the Subcommittees for the opportunity to appear before you today. I appreciate that you have granted me a few minutes to express some individual perspectives, as a member of the Commission, regarding NRC’s role in the important energy issues before your subcommittees.

Chairman Jaczko has addressed the breadth of the NRC’s ongoing activities in the written statement he has submitted on behalf of the Commission. The events at Fukushima in Japan are a sober reminder that nuclear technology is unique and, as I have heard many so many of my colleagues say since these events, requires a total, absolute, and unwavering commitment to nuclear safety in our professional conduct.

The NRC has initiated a systematic review of these events while maintaining its focus on the safety and security of nuclear materials and facilities here in the U.S. The NRC staff continues its work, as well, on the many routine licensing, rulemaking, and inspection activities before the agency.

We appear before you today as a Commission. In my three years of service as an NRC Commissioner, I have come to believe that the Congress was quite deliberate in creating a Commission structure atop the NRC – given the complexity of the issues expected to be addressed by the agency -- and that Commissions are not created for the purpose of fostering unanimity of opinion. Rather, I believe that Congress intends that the push and pull of diverse views on any such small, deliberative body – such as ours – will, hopefully, result in outcomes that have been examined from different angles, tested through debate and argument, and are stronger as a result. One such issue before the Commission now – and under review by this Committee -- is Yucca Mountain.

Since October of last year, I have been public in my disagreement with the Chairman’s direction to begin the closeout of the NRC’s technical review of the Yucca Mountain licensing application under the terms of the continuing resolution, particularly while an adjudicatory appeal related to the Secretary of Energy’s request to withdraw the application is pending, unresolved, before the Commission itself. I cast my vote in that adjudicatory appeal on August 25, 2010. The vote I cast was based on thorough study and review of the underlying record, including the licensing board’s decision, as well as the substantial briefs filed before the Commission by parties to the proceeding. I have a strong conviction for the position I have taken and I have not altered my judgment, since that time. The Commission has failed to complete final agency action on this matter. Nevertheless, I stand ready to do my part, at any time, to bring this matter to conclusion.

The Yucca Mountain issue is one of many currently before the NRC. As I anticipate this hearing will make clear, the NRC has an important and decisive role to play in America’s energy future. The ability of NRC to perform this role is an appropriate area of scrutiny as your subcommittees debate the energy policies of this country, now and into the future. In my personal experience, I have found the NRC to be an organization of extremely dedicated safety professionals who are ever mindful of their important obligations to the Nation. My objective each day is to be the kind of Commissioner they deserve. Thank you again for this opportunity and I look forward to answering your questions.