

**Statement of Commissioner Stephen G. Burns  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works**

**December 3, 2014**

Thank you Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Vitter and members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today with my fellow Commissioners. At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks and best wishes to Chairman Macfarlane as she enters her final month of service with the agency. Also, to my fellow Commissioners, I would like to extend my deep appreciation for welcoming me back to the NRC, and I look forward to working together to accomplish the agency's mission. Finally, I want to acknowledge the warm and heart-felt welcome I have received from my former colleagues in the Office of the General Counsel and the NRC staff.

As a junior attorney starting his career at the NRC in 1978, I would not have imagined that I would be sitting here thirty-six years later as a Commissioner. The mission of the agency remains as vitally important today as when I started with the NRC. The protection of the public health and safety and common defense and security against the potential hazards presented by the use of radiological materials is a critically important task and one to which I have been committed for my entire career. The NRC also has a responsibility to ensure that its decisions are based on sound legal and technical footing, and are transparent to all stakeholders.

Having spent the last few years outside of the NRC has allowed me to take stock of the agency. I continue to believe that the NRC is one of the best organizations in the federal government, and I can say from the perspective of the international community that the NRC is enormously respected and is often looked to for technical and policy leadership. However, acknowledging the agency's high caliber should not be understood to mean that the NRC cannot improve. We all recognize that the climate in which the agency operates has changed over the last number of years, and it is the NRC's obligation to be agile in responding to changes in its environment.

In closing, I thank the Committee for its continued support of the NRC and the opportunity to appear today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.