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P. O. Box 4  
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September 12, 2001

DOCKETED  
USNRC

Richard A. Meserve, Chairman  
Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D. C. 20555

September 17, 2001 (3:59PM)

OFFICE OF SECRETARY  
RULEMAKINGS AND  
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Dear Chairman Meserve:

I am very concerned and upset that the NRC is even considering licensing rule changes which would drastically reduce the rights of the public to participate in nuclear plant licensing hearings, particularly when the job of the NRC is to ensure that civilian uses of nuclear materials and facilities are conducted in a manner consistent with the public health and safety, and with the quality of our environment.

I feel that it is imperative that the public, including state government, be ensured meaningful participation in formal public hearings at at least the level presently provided for in the rules. Also, the rules need to provide for mandatory discovery of documents for the disclosure of opposing evidence and to provide the right to cross examination to confront witnesses on statements of fact. The NRC rules should not restrict the amount and quality of information accessible to the public in the NRC document rooms. The rules also need to provide adequate time – at least a month after the publication of a hearing notice in order for the public to present their contentions.

Nearly my entire family lives within 35 miles of nuclear power plants. My three grandchildren deserve to have a healthy life and so does everyone else. Frankly, it scares me to think about the NRC changing the licensing rules so that the corporate owners can have more latitude in building and operating nuclear power plants when one crucial mistake could have lethal consequences.

When Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, they intended that the nuclear industry be required to have to defend its proposals in formal public hearings. We expect this to not be changed.

We will be very fortunate if there are not nuclear accidents or sabotage of nuclear plants in the years ahead. Weakening the rules for licensing is likely to only put the public more in potential jeopardy than we already are. We look to you as an NRC Commissioner to uphold your responsibility to us the public who rely on you for our safety in these matters.

I remind you that corporations base their decisions almost entirely on economics and if the health and safety of the public gets in the way of profits, the public will be put at great risk. It is therefore important to not change the licensing rules as presently proposed. Your decision on this may affect all our lives. Please be responsible to us.

Sincerely,

  
Nancy Rice

Copies to: Senator Leahy  
Senator Jeffords  
Congressman Sanders