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Jessica Weinberg
Ohio Northern University
402 W. College Ave. Unit 1689
Ada, OH 45810

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Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Richard Meserve, Chairman
Washington DC 20005

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OFFICE OF SECRETARY
RULEMAKINGS AND
ADJUDICATIONS STAFF

Dear Mr. Meserve and NRC Staff:

I am concerned to learn that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is considering a serious revision of the process by which it grants nuclear reactor operating licenses, namely the elimination of public hearings.

While I can understand that the public hearing process may be cumbersome and tedious, the NRC has no plans to eliminate the hearings held when corporations are accused of safety violations. These are the hearings at which corporations are the defendants, in a manner of speaking, and get to plead their cases when they are accused of wrongdoing. They have the right to do this. Yet the NRC proposes to take away the rights of individual citizens to defend their interests when they see those interests threatened by the issuance of a nuclear reactor license. This seems to me to be a double standard, favoring the industry over the citizenry.

By eliminating the role of citizen input in the licensing process, the NRC would undermine American democracy. Citizens have good reason to worry when nuclear reactor licenses are issued or renewed. The nuclear industry has a long history of compromising public safety in order to save or make money. A 1999 study by the consumer group Public Citizen found that most nuclear power plants around the country had violated safety regulations, but that the NRC had created an "amnesty" period, lasting until March of 2001, during which you ignored all but the most serious violations. (This was a sad abdication of responsibility on the NRC's part, and I hope you will not do such a thing in the future.)

I realize that the NRC and other government agencies must sometimes make decisions about licensing and other matters that do not entirely conform to the wishes of the citizens who give input, but it is still only fair to allow that input to be given. I hope that the NRC will continue to hold public hearings before nuclear reactor operating licenses are issued or renewed. In fact, I believe that the NRC could and should do a better job of notifying the public before the public hearings take place. The NRC should regulate the industry to protect people, not regulate people to protect the industry.

Thank you for reading my comments. I look forward to your response.

Yours truly,



Jessica Weinberg

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