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U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

BRIEFING ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO)

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Public Meeting

Before the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission:

Gregory B. Jaczko, Chairman

Kristine L. Svinicki, Commissioner

George Apostolakis, Commissioner

William C. Ostendorff, Commissioner

APPEARANCES

NRC Staff:

Bill Borchardt,
Executive Director for Operations

Miriam Cohen
Director, Office of Human Resources

Jody Hudson
Associate Director for Training, Office of Human Resources

Jeri Buchholz
Associate Director for Operations and Policy,
Office of Human Resources

Corenthis Kelley
Director, Office of Small Business and Civil Rights

Dale Yeilding, Chapter President of the National Treasury
Employees Union

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, good morning everyone. We will start
3 today's meeting. The meeting today is to get a briefing from the Office of Human
4 Resources and the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights, and others about
5 the NRC's Human Resources. And we're very privileged here at the agency to
6 have a very diverse, talented, and well trained workforce. And that's in no small
7 part due to the hard work of the offices that are going to be presenting today.

8 We'll discuss a number of important initiatives designed to benefit
9 current employees, including professional development opportunities and work-
10 life programs. All of these programs are geared towards ensuring that the NRC
11 continues to be both a great place to work and a place that ultimately does great
12 work. Whether through our extensive training programs, our open collaborative
13 working environment, or our work-life balance initiatives, I believe the staff has
14 done a really good job and really very good work in this area. And, ultimately, all
15 of these efforts are focused on helping us achieve our mission. So I know there's
16 been a lot of talk and a lot of discussion about federal workers in the last year,
17 year and a half timeframe. And I have to say that at every opportunity I get I like
18 to talk about the people at this agency, because I think we have a tremendously
19 dedicated workforce. I think a lot of the things that are being said are not
20 reflective of the people that I see working here, in the Regions and throughout
21 the agency every day. So, I think this means a good opportunity to hear from the
22 staff about the kinds of things we're doing to make sure that we provide all of you
23 with the resources that you need to do your important work on behalf of the

1 American people. So, I look forward to the briefing. I think it'll be a very good
2 one. And I'm sure there'll be lots of good questions. Any other comments from
3 my colleagues? Okay, great. Bill, you want to start?
4 MR. BORCHARDT: Good morning. Thank you. As you know, it
5 has been a very challenging environment for the entire federal family these days.
6 And in addition to our normal domestic workload and our normal responsibilities,
7 we've had the added burden of having to deal with the events in Japan. And
8 throughout all that I have been impressed by the ability of the staff to stay
9 focused on our core mission and to continue doing their daily jobs in a very
10 professional and high quality manner. So, I know that will continue. Also
11 impressed with the way they've been able to stay focused on the principles of the
12 Comprehensive Diversity Management Plan and EEO principles. And even
13 though we have maybe fewer personnel decisions being made, we're still paying
14 very close attention to those principles and living those values every day. In
15 addition to all that, we continue to look for more efficient and effective ways in
16 doing our job. And you're going to hear a little bit about that in the presentation
17 this morning. Slide two shows the agenda for today's briefing. And I will turn the
18 presentation over to Miriam.
19 MS. COHEN: Good morning, Chairman, Commissioners. It's great
20 to be here today. First, I want to extend my thanks and gratitude to the
21 employees in the Office of Human Resources for their hard work and effort.
22 They're really a critical component of our agency's ability to recruit, train, and
23 develop the high performing workforce that we have. As Bill mentioned, we're in
24 uncertain times as federal employees. We all hear the news and read the
25 newspapers. But despite the uncertainty that's out there, we feel very strongly

we have a dedicated staff that's committed to the mission of the agency. Our employees still view this organization as a great place to work. We value our employees for their knowledge, their expertise, and their professionalism. And rather than listen to me all morning, I'm going to give you a chance to hear what some of our employees feel about the workplace. Chris?

[video playing]

FEMALE SPEAKER: It's not so much what drew me into public service but what keeps me in public service. I think the mission of this agency is so important to our world. And knowing that I support that mission makes me proud.

MALE SPEAKER: NRC offers quite a significant amount of programs here. There is the New Flex. There is the local gym inside. There is a health care center. And also there is the daycare facility, which I have my three-year-old son there. It's great having my son inside, because we could always drop by at our lunch break to check him out, make sure that he's fine.

MALE SPEAKER: For me to work at home in the morning between 5:30 and 7:30 and take care of two hours, and then take two hours of break so that I can get the kids ready for school and see them off. I'll come back into work here at the agency on site for five hours and then be able to come back home at 2:30 to pick them up, and then do one hour at home in the evening after I put them to sleep. So that in itself is, I think, an amazing ability.

MALE SPEAKER: If these programs weren't available, I think the opportunity to grow and to learn and to contribute to the agency's mission would be reduced. I think it would probably still get done, but it wouldn't be nearly as effective and efficient in terms of inculcating people into the agency's culture.

1 MALE SPEAKER: Well, if they had never existed, you would have
2 a lot of stressed out people running around the agency.
3 FEMALE SPEAKER: They definitely want to nurture us through
4 programs like the NSPDP, the Team Leader Development Program, and the LPP
5 program. The programs want to give more of myself professionally. It drives me
6 to want to take the next step or the extra step or go the extra mile, because I
7 think that management definitely values what new talent brings to the table.
8 FEMALE SPEAKER: I think the federal salary freeze has had
9 much less of an impact here on us because of all of the programs that we have,
10 whether it's the flexible hours, or teleworking, or the childcare center.
11 FEMALE SPEAKER: I think a program that the NRC could build
12 upon, they already have a good telecommuting program and telework, or work at
13 home, program. I see that program as something that could be built upon. It,
14 there still seems to be some nervousness among both managers and staff on
15 how to use the program and how to use it efficiently. So it would be great to see
16 some tools added in to build the comfort zone of both managers and staff.
17 FEMALE SPEAKER: The only program I would like to see added is
18 a domestic partnership that's not exclusive to same-sex partners, but that's open
19 to all domestic partnership.
20 MALE SPEAKER: I think that I have been a very good contributor
21 to the agency's mission. And I really, honestly can't think of anything more that
22 the agency could do to win me over. They won me over a long time ago.
23 MALE SPEAKER: Japan has really reinforced for me, as well as
24 other people here, the importance of what we do. Well, this is a reminder of what
25 we're here for and why the work that we do is important.

1 [end video]

2 MS. COHEN: Thanks for that brief interlude. As you can see, we
3 have a very motivated and engaged staff. And we still need to be vigilant. We
4 just can't continue to rest on our laurels. We need to continue to listen to
5 employee needs. And while we can't always control negative issues, such as
6 pay freezes, we can work to mitigate their impact on employee engagement by
7 accentuating the positive and by continuing to look for ways to enhance, develop,
8 and promote programs that improve job satisfaction. In that context, we're going
9 to present some information to you this morning on what we're doing in the areas
10 of training and development, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and other tools to
11 maintain the high-performing workforce here at the NRC. And with that I'll turn it
12 over to Jody Hudson.

13 MR. HUDSON: Thank you. Pleasure to be able to address you
14 this morning. I'm going to talk about training and development. And there's
15 three topical areas I'm going to focus on: professional development programs,
16 using technology, and efficiency initiatives.

17 Starting off with professional development. Of course, our primary
18 goal is to ensure our workforce has the skills they need. There's also another
19 strong business case for a good professional development and good training
20 program. And that is that highly engaged employees are about 56 percent more
21 productive, according to information from the corporate executive board, if they
22 are highly engaged. So, and one of the main drivers for employee engagement
23 is training and development. There's a very strong business case from that side
24 as far as maintaining a very engaged workforce. We also have a very wide array
25 of developmental opportunities available here at the NRC. We have about 240

1 instructor-led courses. Number of online courses is increasing dramatically. By
2 the end of this year, we'll be above 1200 online courses.
3 The cornerstone of our Professional Development Program is the
4 Leaders Academy. And we follow a leadership model here at the NRC that
5 builds leadership at all levels of the organization. We build it at the entry level;
6 we build it at the midlevel; we build it at the senior levels. It's a very tailored
7 program, where it's very much designed to build the leadership competencies at
8 the level that is needed, depending upon where you are in the hierarchy of the
9 organization. With regard to Leaders Academy, we've recently completed, as of
10 this last year, the supervisor's curriculum of 14 courses. We've gotten much
11 positive recognition. We even did a webinar on YouTube. You can go to
12 YouTube and see it, where we talked about our program. The OPM considers it
13 a model within the federal government. And we're very proud of that
14 accomplishment.
15 Also, among the courses that are part of the supervisor's
16 curriculum, they're among some of our highest rated courses. We do now
17 measure the effectiveness of our courses. One of the most recent courses,
18 which is Leadership Orientation, rates a 4.7 out of a possible 5. So the workforce
19 very much enjoys that course, thinks it's right on with regard to what it is we're
20 trying to accomplish.
21 Moving on to technology. The first time that I sat in on one of these
22 sessions, I was in the audience, and I still worked for Department of Energy at
23 that time. And one of the questions that, I believe the Chairman at that time
24 asked the question, "What is the workforce's perception of online learning, and of
25 iLearn in particular?" And there was some laughing in the audience. And I

1 thought, “Well, that’s not a good sign.” And when I finally joined NRC, I saw that
2 work was already being done to improve it.
3 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: I think laughter was a better sign than tears.
4 [laughter]
5 MR. HUDSON: But we focused on it. We’ve hired some excellent
6 staff that contribute to making iLearn a success because it is our technology
7 platform for delivering learning and development here at the agency. And until,
8 and unless, we had a very stable platform that people would use and would enjoy
9 using that satisfied their needs, we would never make progress with regard to
10 advancing technology and moving into things like online learning, where we
11 could then save a lot of money here at the agency.
12 This slide, going back to the slide of the user satisfaction. You can
13 see in December of 2009, that’s when we did a benchmark measurement. The
14 overall user satisfaction in the workforce was 59 percent. We’ve measured it at
15 various increments as we’ve continued to improve iLearn. And you can see the
16 consistent upward increase in percent of overall user satisfaction. This last
17 measurement that we did in March 2011 was 89.3. We have plans for a new
18 version of iLearn that will take away some of the pain points. And we expect the
19 satisfaction to increase even further from where it is today. Next slide.
20 Also, I mentioned earlier, we’ve had a dramatic increase in the
21 number of online courses available. And we’ve gone from 90 courses in 2009,
22 by the end of this year we’ll have rolled out 1,250 courses. We already have the
23 courses. It’s just a matter of testing them to make sure that it works well within
24 the iLearn environment before we push those out. But before the end of this FY,
25 we’ll have those out. So dramatic increase. Of course, just having the online

1 content available doesn't translate into results. So let's go to the next page.

2 As you look at this slide here, you can see the growth in number of

3 online courses that are actually taken by the workforce. These are course

4 completions. This slide indicates that we've been relatively stable with regard to

5 the number of course completions with regard to instructor learn. But using e-

6 learning, you see a tremendous uptick, to the point where we're now at 35,000

7 course completions a year, with regard to the online courses. Next slide.

8 Also using technology. We have implemented a process to

9 evaluate 100 percent of our courses that we offer here at NRC. So we know how

10 well we are doing with regard to our courses, what the overall audience reaction

11 is, whether they think that it's going to help them achieve their jobs better. We

12 measure that. And we also, then, have those results rolled up into an electronic

13 dashboard, the second bullet there. Also in your booklets is a copy of the data

14 that's in the dashboard. In your booklet it's like four or five pages. Our

15 dashboard online is -- you have one screenshot, and it shows all the information.

16 So it shows where we are with user satisfaction. It shows where we are with

17 regard to user satisfaction with the individual courses, instructor-led, also online,

18 identifies the top subscribed courses; identifies the top rated courses; also

19 identifies the lowest rated courses, because that's important for us to know also,

20 so we can go in and make improvements if the data suggests that's necessary.

21 Third bullet, reduce costs. I want to just give you a very brief case

22 study. There is a demand, primarily from the Regions, to roll out OSHA Industrial

23 Safety Training for inspectors. We had a 500-person audience. We normally

24 would have done instructor-led training at a 40-hour course. Given the size of

25 the population, we would have had to have had 20 to 25 different offerings, had

1 to pay for each one of those offerings, probably around $15,000. Going to online
2 learning, there is a compression. A 4-hour instructor-led, you can compress
3 down to one hour of online. As a result of going out with an online curriculum for
4 the OSHA Industrial Safety Training, we had a compression that resulted in
5 about $1.5 million in salary savings alone. The investment cost us $20,000. So
6 a tremendous return on investment. Next slide.
7 Efficiency initiatives. As part of the Strategic Acquisition Initiative,
8 Ernst and Young had compiled some data with regard to NRC spend on training
9 and development across the entire agency. And the data revealed that
10 somewhere between 7 and 7.5 million dollars is being spent annually. We
11 dissected that data to try to identify efficiencies. We're now in the process of
12 fleshing out exactly the plan forward with regard to capitalizing on some of those
13 efficiency ideas. As an example, of all the training that's done where offices
14 would send an individual through what's called a 182 process for external
15 training, there's four primary vendors, out of a list of 50, 60, 100 different
16 vendors, four are primarily being used. We think we can enter into seat
17 agreements, seat management agreements with those vendors, and be able to
18 negotiate substantially lower cost per seat. That's something we're pursuing.
19 That concludes my presentation.
20 MS. BUCHHOLZ: Good morning, everyone. Next slide. Two
21 years ago I briefed the Commission on our ongoing efforts on employee
22 feedback and communication, largely related to the Federal Employee Viewpoint
23 Survey. During that period of time, we've had the opportunity to benchmark the
24 NRC against a wide variety of organizations, including Entergy, NASA, FDIC,
25 Homeland Security, and the British Royal Navy. And what we found is that our

1 Human Capital Program is substantially similar to all of these organizations.
2 There aren't any magic programs that those organizations have that we don't
3 have. In fact, we have many programs that they don't have. And they all do
4 those kinds of employee outreach and feedback activities, including surveys and
5 focus groups. But the thing that makes the NRC substantially different from
6 these organizations and makes the NRC very unique is our ongoing efforts to
7 close the loop with employees once we receive feedback from them. So our
8 efforts to ask employees their opinion, to take action on that opinion, and then
9 get back to employees and say, "Here's what's different, because you told us that
10 this matters to you. Please give us your opinion again." And it appears to be the
11 thing that is most unique about the NRC. Next slide.
12 Since I spoke to you last on this topic, we've had a major effort
13 underway and have been engaged in significant communication and outreach
14 activities in these areas. These activities have focused on employee
15 empowerment, empowerment in their work, their lives, and their careers.
16 Empowerment is the underlying message behind our Maximize Your Potential
17 campaign. And we have some posters from some of the activities that we've
18 done this year up in the back of the room. And we've mentioned all of the things
19 that are going on at the federal government level. The one that is frequently
20 mentioned is the federal pay freeze. Employees cannot control the federal pay
21 freeze; they can't control the decisions that the President makes; and they can't
22 control the decisions that the Congress makes. But there are a lot of things that
23 are still within their control. And the Maximize Your Potential campaign focuses
24 on those things that are within an employee's control, such as selecting a good
25 benefits program for themselves and their families, building skills through training

1 and rotational assignments, creating a good work-life balance through New Flex
2 and Telework.
3 This year we've conducted several very substantial programs,
4 including our Internal, and some of you attended some of those, our Internal
5 Career Fair, we had a Telework Day agency-wide, and we had a very successful
6 recent Financial Planning Fair. And we believe that all of these activities, as
7 demonstrated by the video, help build employee engagement and empowerment,
8 and keep employees feeling good about working for the federal government and
9 the NRC. Next slide.
10 After many years of significant growth, the NRC is heading into a
11 period of some significant change, resulting from changes in the budget, having
12 reached our hiring goal, et cetera. And it's not clear exactly how the NRC's going
13 to look at the end of all of these changes that we're working our way through.
14 And this creates some uncertainty in the workforce. And that is absolutely to be
15 expected. What we want to make sure that you understand today is that our
16 Human Capital Program is up to this challenge, that we have the programs and
17 the processes and the procedures to help employees work their way through this
18 change. And that the key factor, which has been the key factor in our success all
19 along, is frank and ongoing communication with the workforce. We believe that
20 we do have a dedicated, well-trained, talented workforce. And we believe that
21 once the new direction of the agency becomes clear, they will use the programs
22 that are available to them to align their work life and careers with this new
23 direction. And that concludes my presentation for today. I think I'm turning it
24 over to Ren.
25 MS. KELLEY: Chairman, Commissioners, thank you very much for

1 the opportunity to brief on a few topics this morning, continuing the theme of
2 trying to build and maintain a positive environment within the agency and to
3 continue our outreach externally. As you know, this is the interim briefing for the
4 EEO briefing. And so we touch on a few things, give a status report. But the
5 more extensive briefing comes at the end of the year for us. First slide please.
6 Next slide.
7 The Mentoring Program, NRC maintains and operates a facilitated
8 mentoring program. And this program is participated in by a very diverse group
9 of mentors and mentees. Of course, we know that mentoring at NRC is not just
10 through the facilitated mentoring program. We have a very strong and effective
11 and beneficial informal mentoring program. And it really -- it takes the whole
12 package to have that balanced exchange of information sharing, of experiences.
13 But the focus of the information that is in front of you has to do with the facilitated
14 program, which is a more formal type of mentoring.
15 The first few slides or points, that program enhances productivity,
16 supports recruitment and retention, supports leaders, the leadership academy
17 objectives. All of those are kind of self-evident, that you will have, as a result of
18 the agency providing an opportunity for employees to focus on their career, their
19 development, and to link to someone who has a broader experience base,
20 certainly is an advantage. And we have a number of employees who take
21 advantage of this opportunity. While the program is not specifically intended to
22 ensure a promotion, one of the data points is that essentially 70 percent of the
23 employees who participate in the Mentoring Program have gotten promoted
24 since they entered the program. We don’t know whether there’s a direct link.
25 But we’d like to think that it certainly helped, rather than being a negative toward

1 that objective. With regard to participant demographics, as I mentioned, there's a
2 very diverse group. And the age ranges from 25 to 68. And that includes both
3 the mentors and those that are mentored. And 57 percent of the participants are
4 minorities, 62 percent are females, and 48 percent of the mentors are in
5 leadership positions. Next slide please.
6 With regard to the Minority Serving Institutions program, which is a
7 program that enables us to outreach to our external stakeholders. Keeping that
8 connection helps the agency in terms of its recruitment, and ensuring that it has a
9 diverse base of employees to reach to when we get ready to hire. And so we
10 have a very active Minority Serving Institutions program. And I want to just
11 mention a few things that we did in recent months during that program. We had
12 an MSI boot camp. And that boot camp was very intense, it was hands-on; it
13 was not done in camp conference form, but it was an opportunity to really drill
14 into those who participated, well over 200 participants, and assist them with how
15 do you connect with federal agencies. How do you connect with the federal
16 government? How do we make sure that what we're doing is important to the
17 work that the federal government carries out? And how do we obtain financial
18 support through grants and other opportunities from the federal government? So
19 it was a very intense and well-received activity.
20 We've been very active with the White House Initiative. And the
21 White House Initiative has a committee or group for African Americans, for
22 Hispanics, for Asians, and for Native Americans. Right now, NRC has three
23 programs, in this Minority Serving Institutions program, for we have one for the
24 historically black colleges and universities, with the Hispanic serving institutions,
25 tribal colleges, but we have not stood up an Asian Pacific program. The White

1 House has issued an executive order concerning that. We have not stood that
2 program up. It was not a part of our original. We have been considering that.
3 And that is an area that we are looking at how we can carry out that initiative
4 without having that formal program stood up. We know those institutions. And
5 we are making every effort to outreach to them as we do the other programs,
6 even though we do not have a formal Asian Pacific serving program.
7 With regard to the individuals that participate in this program, we
8 outreach to them. Many of them have become NRC employees. And so that
9 connection, that link is there. Ten of 50, or 20 percent of the hires for 2010 were
10 from Minority Serving Institutions. And 10 of the 64 summer hires for 2010 were
11 from Minority Serving Institutions. And in 2010, six of the 12 individuals who
12 were participating in the Co-op Program were actually hired by NRC. Next slide,
13 please.
14 NRC employees continue to be recognized by external
15 organizations. And we have about 40 or so employees who have received these
16 external recognitions. Because the list is so long, I won't try to read the names.
17 But I will -- the information that is presented there tells you the different
18 categories of awards that the employees received, in leadership, in EEO and
19 diversity management, and a number of recognitions from the Federal Executive
20 Board, including the Gold, the Silver, and the Bronze Achievements, Engineer of
21 the Year, Employee of the Year, Career Achievements, and Patriot Support to
22 Navy Reserves. This is just indicative of the caliber of NRC's workforce. That
23 those external to the organization take the chance to stop and applaud the
24 services of NRC employees. And we put that information on the SBCR website,
25 so that you can go there if you want to take a look at the list, the entire list, with

1 the organization, the office that the employee works in, and the names of the
2 employer. They are all there on our website. Thank you so much.
3 MR. BORCHARDT: That completes the staff's presentation.
4 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, thanks for that presentation. We'll
5 start with Commissioner Ostendorff.
6 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
7 Thank you all for your presentations and for your service. Earlier this week, I had
8 a chance to present a 15 year service pin to Andrea Kock from my staff and our
9 office had a chance to kind of reflect upon what it means to be a public servant
10 here at the NRC. And I think everything that you have said captures that public
11 service notion of how you approach you work, and I commend you for that,
12 because that's the high level vision piece that is so essential to being effective
13 leaders.
14 I have some comments, I may get to a question, too -- I want to
15 make some comments on a couple different presentations. And I've been here
16 14 months, wanted to maybe make two observations on what sets the NRC, from
17 my personal experience with DOD and the Department of Energy, maybe in a
18 little different space, and some of you've already hit upon it, but let me highlight
19 two specific examples.
20 I was asked last August to speak to a DOE nuclear executive
21 leadership training course; and so I did that last summer. I had been here
22 perhaps 4 months at the time. And I was struck -- I was asked a question:
23 "What's different at NRC, compared to your experience in the National Nuclear
24 Security Administration?" And I said, "Well, you know one of the things I see
25 that's significantly different is the use of rotational assignments for personal

1 growth and for organizational growth." And that is done on such a widespread
2 basis here at the NRC. It is not widely done elsewhere in the federal
3 government. And I think that is a real strength of the Human Capital Program
4 here at the agency. And I think, when you get into a stress test, Bill, you
5 mentioned this, you get into a stress situation like, you know, how to NRC
6 respond to Fukushima incident? The fact that so many people have worked with
7 others in the organization have already broken down those barriers on an
8 ongoing basis, just goes long ways towards making efforts more effective.
9 So I wanted to point out that contrast, but also may be a direct
10 manifestation of where it pays off as being able to respond. And so I commend
11 the EDO's Office and the Human Capital Office for what you've done to make
12 those rotational assignments part of how NRC operates. I think it's really
13 important.
14 The second piece, and you already hit upon it, one of you did, is
15 communications. I think the online Reporter dates from Human Resources.
16 Miriam and Bill, your EDO updates; those are very effective. I think we all read
17 them and we got a lot out of those. And I know my staff does, but I also contrast
18 that to my experience in other organizations. I encourage you to keep those
19 communications up.
20 Jody I'm going to turn just a minute to iLearn. I used to hate to take
21 online training courses. I despised them. And I've been around the block a
22 number of times elsewhere, I've taken a lot of them over many years. And I'll tell
23 you the ones I've taken here have been very well done -- limited set of the ethics,
24 computer security awareness training, and safeguards training. I thought those
25 were all very well done. So I just wanted to give you that feedback and I think

1 those were very effective courses.

2 Ren, in your area I wanted to congratulate you on the external

3 awards you've received. I won't comment further, but I think that's a real

4 testament to the program that you and your team have. I want to comment on

5 mentoring just for a minute, because a lot of us -- I know that people on this side

6 of the table are involved in mentoring people here in the audience are, and

7 oftentimes, the discussion is what does the mentee get out of it? And that's an

8 important part. But I'll also say, we also ought to emphasize, and I think you do,

9 this value to mentor. I think any mentor, he or she, benefits from 30 minutes or

10 an hour, whatever time period we're talking about, once a week or once a month,

11 putting themselves in the shoes of somebody who is maybe 10, 20, or 30 years

12 younger. And I think it makes us better leaders by serving as mentors. And so, I

13 encourage you to emphasize that part of the program. And I think you did during

14 your presentation. That's something that doesn't get enough visibility.

15 You and I have had a chance, Ren, over the last year to talk with

16 some of your colleagues, and we've engaged the following topic. It's a very

17 specific one. And that is what the agency is doing in the area of combat veterans

18 and hiring. And I'm very close to that issue. My son left the Army May 15th.

19 He's looking for employment. He's now looking to work in NRC, but I'm very

20 close to that issue, as somebody who has moved seven or eight times in the last

21 five years that doesn't have roots in someplace. And, you know, the combat vets

22 of Iraq and Afghanistan have a greater than 20 percent unemployment rate right

23 now. And we've had a chance to talk about that over the last year, and I

24 encourage -- I know that some of your folks are working in the area -- I want to

25 encourage you to continue to do that, because I think it's something that we

1 ought to try to see what we can do to help these people who have served our
2 country.
3 Those are the comments I wanted to make. I wanted to ask Miriam
4 maybe a question here real quick on a separate note. About how many job
5 applicants do we have for a typical NRC job announcement?
6 MS. COHEN: I might turn this over to Jeri. I know, in contract
7 space, we've gotten over, you know, thousands of applicants for some of our
8 jobs. And the one thing that's been very interesting, as you know, the federal
9 government, close to a year ago, went to resume only. And so, this elimination
10 of these knowledge skill abilities enticed more and more people to apply for jobs.
11 So, we don't lack for people applying for our jobs. In fact, we have probably
12 many more than we can actually handle, in terms of getting through them quickly.
13 But I'll let Jeri amplify.
14 MS. BUCHHOLZ: That is absolutely correct. It really depends on
15 the occupation. We received close to 3,000 applications for an entry level
16 contract specialist position. On the other hand, if we're looking at some of the
17 very --
18 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: That's for a single position?
19 MS. BUCHHOLZ: Correct.
20 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Or is it general posted?
21 MS. BUCHHOLZ: No. It was a single position. For some of the
22 more specialized, esoteric, technical positions, it might be very few. But as I
23 recall, the year that we hired 295 people, we received 22,000 job applications.
24 So, we are well-known in the nuclear community. We're well-known in the
25 federal government, where we get our corporate support candidates. And we do

1 receive very well-qualified applicants for a position. We really only need one
2 really well-qualified for each position, but we do -- our managers do tend to have
3 a nice choice of candidates to choose from when they're filling their positions.
4 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Thank you. Thank you all for
5 your service. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
6 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I thank you as well for your
7 presentations, and I want to acknowledge that for each of you sitting at the table,
8 I know that there are colleagues in your organizations that helped to prepare for
9 today's meeting. So I want to thank any of them that are in the audience or
10 maybe listening back in their offices. But I know a lot of work goes into preparing
11 for these meetings.
12 I might do, as Commissioner Ostendorff did, have a few comments
13 and then I'm going to end with a couple of general questions. But Jody, I would
14 say, on iLearn, I was looking at your statistics on satisfaction. And I think it's
15 always going to be difficult to get surveys of satisfaction with iLearn really, really
16 high, because I think people reflect onto the iLearn system their -- maybe their
17 frustration with the need to take a lot of mandatory training, so I think it probably
18 suppresses your numbers a little bit, but they've come up very impressively. And
19 I know, in my early time here, my personal frustration was, and this is so key, if
20 you've sat through an online mandatory course, sometimes you -- at the very
21 end, it wouldn't give you credit or print your certificate. And that's the thing -- if
22 you've gone through it, okay, so you've gotten that far. The fact that you're
23 getting your credit for your mandatory training -- very important -- that I have not
24 had that problem in the last year or so. So thank you for working out what I
25 consider to be really almost the most significant bug with iLearn, is getting credit

1 for what you've done.

2 Also, you know, we are putting a lot of this mandatory training that
3 some of it is statutorily required for all employees, and I think it's wonderful that
4 we have the flexibility. You can then elect to do it early in the day before you get
5 busy or late at night. And I think that that's a key part of people's satisfaction, is if
6 you have to do it, at least you to get choose when -- what time is most
7 convenient to you.

8 Jeri, I want to say that I appreciated you emphasizing closing the
9 loop and how that's a contrast. I think a real strength of this agency is the
10 various avenues that we have for employees through differing professional
11 opinions, and employee concerns, team player awards -- is we try to not just
12 allow employees to speak, but to hear them. And I think that power of being
13 heard is the key difference between having those programs and having
14 successful programs. So thank you for emphasizing that. It's a real strong
15 personal belief that I have.

16 I know we don't -- there's been emphasis about the fact that we
17 don't control things, like pay freezes. But something I'm certain, Miriam, that you
18 and your team are thinking about, if there is, and I'm not making any merits
19 comment on it, but if there are legislated changes to federal retirement systems
20 that are significant, we've looked at the, you know, the economic downturn and
21 we know that affected people's decisions. People who are eligible to retire may
22 have deferred those plans, but I think that if there is the potential for significant
23 legislative changes to retirement systems, we will have employees re-looking at,
24 you know, their plans.

25 And one thing that I think is another strength of the NRC is that --

1 my sense is people are pretty forthcoming about their retirement plans and they
2 let their supervisors know, you know, if they are in a position to do that. That's
3 wonderful for the agency, because we can dust off our succession planning for
4 that particular position and look at being ready for needing to make a personnel
5 change there. I guess there's not a lot we can do. We just have to continue to
6 be nimble and keep our eye on anything that's emerging there, but if, like other
7 federal agencies, we suddenly experienced a significant number of people that
8 were accelerating their plans to depart, that's a tough thing for any organization
9 to weather, and we have so many specialized experts that I think it would be
10 difficult for us.
11 So that'll kind of get me to a couple of general questions that I
12 wanted to throw out. First, Bill, I want to say that I've noticed, during your tenure
13 as Executive Director, you've tried to really communicate directly with first line
14 supervisors and we know so much of employee satisfaction with their work has to
15 do with that significant relationship between them and their first line supervisor. I
16 know that you have -- I'm sure, as frequently as you're able -- meetings directly
17 with first line supervisors. So my question to you would be what are your key
18 messages to first line supervisors as we go into this period of uncertainty?
19 And then I'll ask Miriam to comment a little bit. You took the helm
20 from a very experienced individual, Jim McDermott, that we all have a lot of
21 respect for. I'm certain, before he left, he probably told you there were a few key
22 things he recommended to keep your eye on. But you've had the helm now for a
23 while, so what did he recommend and what are the issues that you're keeping
24 your eyes on, that you've decided are the most important? So, I'll throw that over
25 to you guys.

1 MR. BORCHARDT: Two immediate things come to mind. You
2 know, one of the things that makes the NRC such a great place to work is this
3 focus on mission. I mean, it sounds very theoretical and we say it all the time,
4 but it really is true. And, so one is just to encourage those first line supervisors to
5 stay focused on that, because if we agree on that as the central point of why
6 we're here and what we're all focused on doing, then a lot of trivial friction points -
7 - they are recognized for being trivial and we can work through them.
8 The second thing that I try to let them make sure they understand is
9 that there's a whole organization that wants them to succeed. And that they
10 shouldn't live with the frustration or a problem, because everybody else sitting at
11 this table is there to help them accomplish the mission and come up with a better
12 way of doing something. And we shouldn't -- they shouldn't be confined by what
13 they perceive to be a rule or a roadblock to doing what's the right thing. And, you
14 know, as was mentioned earlier by Jeri, a lot of the things that we as an agency
15 take such great credit for didn't originate with me, or my predecessor, or anyone
16 else sitting at this table. It was somebody within the staff that said, “Well, why
17 can't we do this?” And you know, once you look at it, actually, you can do that.
18 So, let's try to put that into practice and test it out. And that's how a lot of things
19 with flexi place and flexi time actually built a lot of momentum.
20 And so, it's that. I know, when I was a first line supervisor, you feel
21 like you have the world -- the weight of the world on your shoulders. And I just
22 wanted them to know that there's an entire organization that wants them to
23 succeed.
24 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Miriam?
25 MS. COHEN: Well, no one can replace Jim McDermott, that's for

1 sure. And everyone should rest assured that he's still working. I say that
2 “working” with a smile on my face. He's actually at OPM, helping them try to
3 make their organization more like ours. And what's actually interesting is, is that
4 you know, he still calls, still wants to know what's going on. So he still feels a
5 need to be plugged in. But I think the greatest thing that I got from him is, always
6 about putting people first. It's never about yourself. It's never about your
7 position. And then when you're in the HR business, it's always about putting the
8 people first, and be authentic, and be upfront, and communicate frankly with the
9 individuals that you work with and the people that work for you.
10 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
11 Chairman.
12 COMMISSIONER APOSTALAKIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I
13 join my colleagues in thanking you for the work you're doing for the agency. I
14 have a question for Mr. Hudson. On Slide 7, you talk about the leadership --
15 Leaders Academy. And I understand that a good number of our staff want to
16 follow that route and go up the management line there. But there is also a
17 smaller group of very talented people who really want to follow a different kind of
18 career, to remain more technical and not really become managers. And
19 sometimes, in fact, I hear from them that maybe the agency does not appreciate
20 them that much, although I'm not sure that that's true. But do we have anything
21 similar for these people, how they can advance within the agency and still remain
22 very technical? Not that the managers are not technical, but you know, it's a
23 different kind of thing.
24 MR. HUDSON: Yes, we do. In fact, the Leaders Academy itself
25 already incorporates that aspect. The Leaders Academy addresses all segments

1 of the work force, in terms of building leadership skills, all the way from the front
2 line staff all the way through executive and everything in between. And for the
3 front line staff, the technical people would be included in this. The first segment
4 is situational leaders. And situational leaders -- there's a course that you sign up
5 for, it's “Leadership Assessment.” There are diagnostics that are given to identify
6 what skill sets in the leadership arena they want to focus on. They would
7 develop an executive or an individual development plan. There's also, as part of
8 that work force segment tailored program, “Leadership Orientation” and
9 “Leadership Communications.” And so that's available to all employees.
10 COMMISSIONER APOSTALAKIS: Regarding the iLearn, I must
11 say I'm still trying to adjust to the idea that I have to take classes after --
12 [laughter]
13 -- 30 years of giving classes.
14 [laughter]
15 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Get over it, George.
16 COMMISSIONER APOSTALAKIS: So, well, it's hard. And it's
17 hard.
18 [laughter]
19 But you also mentioned that some of the courses are not doing the
20 very well, in the sense that people don't think they're useful or whatever. Can
21 you give us examples and what are you doing about them?
22 MR. HUDSON: Yes, we -- in the past, before we were measuring
23 our courses, we might have an indication that, you know, a course is outstanding
24 or a course maybe isn't as effective as it should be, but we really didn't know until
25 we implemented an automated assessment process, where we systematically

1 assessed every single course. And the learners will fill out a feedback form at
2 the end of the course. And we can roll that data up and do all kinds of statistics
3 on it. And courses are evaluated on a 1 to 5 scale; and 5 being outstanding and
4 1 being the course isn't very good.
5 And the average of all the courses we deliver, both online and
6 instructor-led, which by the way, you might think that instructor-led might be
7 higher because people don't like online learning, the average is the same: about
8 4.1, 4.2 for either instructor-led or online learning. But we have sort of a trigger
9 threshold that we've established, which is 3.5. Anything that drops below a 3.5
10 we will immediately take a look at and find out what is it about that course that
11 the employees don't find the value or that they find distracting about the course
12 or, for whatever reason, why is rated at that level? And now that we're
13 systematically collecting that data, we can do that kind of drill down and find out,
14 or at least it gives us the data to indicate where we should probe to get more
15 information. In the past, we weren't able to do that, or at least not be able to do
16 that very well. So, very rarely, will we have a course that drops to that level, but
17 occasionally -- in particularly, we have a new course. And although we've beta
18 tested it, we've not really test-driven it very much. And in that case -- and we had
19 one, oh, within the last five or six months, a course, we rolled it out, and we were
20 getting 3.3s, 3.4s. So, we immediately looked into it, solved it, rolled it back out,
21 and now it's one of our highest rated courses.
22 COMMISSIONER APOSTALAKIS: Is it usually the subject matter
23 that people don't like? Or the content?
24 MR. HUDSON: It could be a variety of reasons. It could be they
25 didn't feel the instructor was prepared. It's either -- there's nine different

1 questions that we ask about the course itself. And then there's another series of
2 questions about the instructor, what the instructor was, you know -- the
3 perception as to whether they were sufficiently prepared, whether they seemed
4 to have a firm grasp of the material, basically being an expert in the material.
5 And then the reasons why a course might be rated low, it could be any of those
6 things that could pull the score down. But the thing is, we have that data now,
7 and we can identify where it is, and what area of the course is being pulled down,
8 and be able to effectively address that.
9 COMMISSIONER APOSTALAKIS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
10 Chairman.
11 COMMISSIONER JACZKO: Here is a question for you, Jeri, for
12 Miriam. One of the challenges we'll be facing, I think, is probably reduced
13 opportunity for hiring in the future. And we'll have -- with likely consistent levels
14 of staffing. So, just naturally, we won't have the kind of hiring activity we've had
15 over the last several years. And one of the areas where I think we've made such
16 tremendous strides is in a lot our diversity goals and our diversity focus. Given
17 that we'll have fewer opportunities for hiring, what kind of strategies do you have
18 to ensure that we continue to make progress in areas like hiring veterans and
19 other -- ensuring other kinds of diversity for our hiring practices? Or for our work
20 force itself?
21 MS. COHEN: I'll do a little bit -- I'll give it to Jeri for more of the
22 details. But I think some of the challenges that we have is -- in this environment
23 is that there's going to be less opportunities. But if we listen to Ren and some of
24 her briefings, we talked about the feeder groups and how important that is. And I
25 think we've done a good job in the past few years in trying to enhance the

1 diversity in NRSPDP. We just completed the LPP selection process, and I'm
2 pleased to report that we have, out of the 24, I think, candidates, you know,
3 women and minorities, there's 12 of them; and that represents, you know, 50
4 percent representation. So I think as we continue to bring women in the
5 organization and minorities and increase the amount of opportunities for those
6 folks as they move into the leadership potential program, and even the SES
7 because I know that you've expressed some concerns about we still don't have
8 enough women in some of our SES positions.
9 I remain optimistic. If I look at the numbers, and granted, we talked
10 about if people are forthcoming about their retirement plans. While there may not
11 be waves, unless there are Congressional changes to federal retirement
12 systems. I mean, three years plus, there's going to be significant turnover in this
13 organization, in terms of the numbers that could be leaving in SES space. We
14 have five women in the waiting, now, in SES CDP land that I think are viable
15 candidates for opportunities. So, I remain optimistic. I think if you look at the
16 demographics in the agency, while we did a lot in the past five years to lower the
17 number, lower the average age, I still think that in three years plus, there are
18 going to be the next bough wave of heavy retirements. So I think that'll provide
19 more opportunities. Jeri.
20 MS. BUCHHOLZ: Each year, we develop a recruitment plan, which
21 is that -- it's through the Human Capital Council and posted on the HR Internet
22 page for all to see. And we have been making a special effort to make sure that
23 we continue our outreach, substantial outreach, to veterans programs and
24 organizations that recruit individuals with disabilities, to historically black and
25 Hispanic universities and colleges. So I think that we have a role to play in

1 ensuring that a wide variety of people apply for the external vacancies that we
2 have in the agency, so that the supervisor has good choices. And we can
3 continue to work toward achieving the goals, some of which were set for us at the
4 federal government level. But I do think we have a good plan to do that. And I
5 do think that we have a supervisory work force that is well aware of that plan and
6 well aware of the goals that the agency has established.
7 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, thanks. That's good to hear. I wanted
8 to turn to another question. And I think there's something that Commissioner
9 Ostendorff had raised last year -- Commissioner Magwood -- about essential
10 skills and how we're doing in our essential skills hiring. In one area that I've seen
11 manifest itself – really in our mission's success in the area of PRA -- PRA
12 resources -- individuals with PRA skills. Maybe, I don't know if you could touch
13 on that a little bit, where we are in that area in our ability to attract individuals with
14 those very specific skills, and if we see that as a shortage in the future or
15 something that we think we're addressing.
16 MS. COHEN: Well, I can speak more globally about the issue. I
17 don't know how many vacancies we've put out for those. I know it's been an area
18 of concern for the agency in the past few years. I know that it's one of the areas
19 that we identified, that we sought candidates for the graduate fellowship program
20 and we have some folks actually going to school now. I think one of the big
21 challenges facing the agency, and Jeri talked about this a couple of years ago at
22 her briefing, was we have to change the mindset of one-for-one replacement
23 hiring. When we were trying to hire all the people -- 1,000 people over the past
24 five years, we were just trying to like run the machine. Now, I think we have to
25 take a much more critical look and potentially even have positions in the bank,

1 reserved, so that if we have a critical need in PRA or other areas, that we have
2 that pool available. So, if there is a need, you can go and get that.
3 The concern we've had, up to this point, is with some of the overages that we
4 have in FTE space, we don't have that bank available. So I think as we move
5 forward, there's a human capital council that is looking at hiring strategies for the
6 agency. We need to be able to say, “Hey, maybe one office can't hire their
7 particular general engineer because we need this PRA specialist in this office.”
8 So I think we're going to have a much more targeted recruitment strategy and
9 focus, so that we don't just do the one-for-one hiring, which was appropriate five
10 years ago, but is no longer appropriate now.
11 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, I appreciate that. And that certainly is
12 one that I've seen, as a critical skill that in some areas, we don't have it. And it
13 seems to have had an impact on the workforce, or in our work ability to carry out
14 our mission. So, it's a certainly an area we could focus on. I think it would be
15 good.
16 Last thing, I just wanted to have a quick question. You know, we've
17 talked a lot, as we had the first bough wave. We've put a lot of effort into
18 knowledge management programs. And I'm wondering, Bill, maybe what your
19 thoughts are. Now that we've had that program in place and we've had the
20 opportunity to have a lot of experienced people provide their knowledge and
21 perhaps go on to other things, how is that program working? Is it successfully
22 capturing knowledge? Are we able to transfer that to new employees in the way
23 we thought?
24 MR. BORCHARDT: I believe it is successful. The way you look at
25 it, at least to me, is the work still being accomplished at a high quality? And we

1 haven't seen a fall-off in the production rate, you know, to the extent that we can
2 measure that kind of thing. We have taken full advantage of the rehired
3 annuitant program over the years, to help do that knowledge management. We
4 now have communities of practice that are being widely used throughout the
5 agency. I mean, this isn't the, you know, heavily controlled program, but it is a
6 communication opportunity.
7 And I think it has been effective. I think it will need to be a
8 permanent fixture here, because -- and I believe that having the practice of 25
9 percent of our external hires, whatever that number turns out to be, but that 25
10 percent should come from entry level. That helps to flatten the age profile. It
11 helps to keep a continuous spectrum of employees, so as long as you have entry
12 level people and they're not coming out of the industry with a lot of experience
13 then you're going to need a knowledge management program. So I think it's a
14 permanent element of how will do business.
15 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, again, thank you for your thoughts.
16 We're going to turn to Dale Yielding now, to share some thoughts on his
17 perspective from the NTEU.
18 MR. YEILDING: Thank you very much, Chairman and
19 Commissioners. Just a few comments on about three subject areas. I think it
20 was brought up at the beginning, the federal employees are under considerable
21 attack, both in the media and from Capitol Hill. And I think Jeri said there's really
22 nothing that we can do about it, but I'll contest that a little bit, because our union
23 has a national president that’s up there testifying on Capitol Hill anytime there's a
24 bill presented, to make sure the federal employee perspective is weighed in for
25 every decision that's made by Congress. And then, of course, all us federal

1 employees can do something about it too. We can go to the polls and we can
2 vote to make sure that we get a set of lawmakers up there that respect the work
3 that we do and treat us appropriately.
4 With regards to the two different career paths that federal
5 employees have: into management or into the technical field. I think it was
6 brought up by Mr. Borchardt, that we're hiring in at the entry level. And of course,
7 the union's always looking out for ways in which we can always promote from
8 within. And I think we would support Borchardt's statement of hiring at the entry
9 level to ensure that the promotional opportunities -- which – from what the union's
10 been briefed, may be fading away with the agency's desire to reduce the number
11 of higher graded employees. And we may be watchful on how that may affect
12 the engagement of employees, if, you know, the lower graded employees don't
13 see as many promotional opportunities and the options to at least apply for
14 promotions as targeting fewer in our flat budget environments. We need to look
15 out for that.
16 And then, last but not least, I'm usually bringing up maybe particular
17 issues at this forum twice a year. I'm happy to say I have an active partnership,
18 now, since the President Obama executive order back in November, December
19 of 2009. It took us a while to get up and running, but we've actually had six one-
20 hour meetings over the past six months. I'm not ready to report any successes
21 quite yet, but we are at least engaging in dialogue and bringing, at least it's a
22 forum, for me to bring issues to the table. And I think we need to report to the
23 National Partnership Council, at the end of the year, some kind of measure of our
24 productivity. And maybe at the next meeting here at the Commission, we can
25 give you some subset of what we reported at the National Council. Thank you

1 very much.

2 CHAIRMAN JACZKO: Well, thank you, Dale and I think it's good to

3 hear that there are good discussions ongoing with the Partnership Council. And I

4 think that's a great initiative and a good opportunity to continue good dialogue

5 with the staff.

6 So, as I think everyone here has said, we certainly appreciate the

7 work that everyone here at this agency does, and the important focus we have

8 on the mission, and everybody's dedication, in particular, in these very

9 challenging times. So once again, I appreciate all the work that you do. And if

10 there's any closing comments from any of my colleagues.

11 Well, keep up the good work and we'll -- we're adjourned. Thank

12 you.

13 [Whereupon, the proceedings were concluded]