

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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ALL EMPLOYEES MEETING WITH THE COMMISSIONERS

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MONDAY

SEPTEMBER 28, 2015

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The Meeting convened in the Bethesda North Marriott & Conference Center in Salons A through E, 5701 Marinelli Road, North Bethesda, Maryland, at 1:32 p.m., Stephen G. Burns, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

STEPHEN G. BURNS, Chairman

KRISTINE L. SVINICKI, Commissioner

WILLIAM G. OSTENDORFF, Commissioner

JEFF BARAN, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT

CYNTHIA CARPENTER, Director, Office of
Administration

VICTOR McCREE, Executive Director for Operations
(EDO)

MARK SATORIUS, Former EDO

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

1:32 p.m.

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2
3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks for everyone coming
4 out today, and I think we'll have an interesting meeting this afternoon,
5 and I'm sure there are lots of great questions to ask and we want to give
6 as much time as possible.

7 First, I do want to introduce Victor McCree. This is his
8 first official day as Executive Director for Operations, and we sort of
9 gathered just in time to welcome him to headquarters.

10 But as you know, Vic was most recently the Region II
11 Administrator in Atlanta, and he's been with the NRC since 1988, and
12 has seen firsthand what we do from a variety of vantage points. I know
13 he and I worked together on the 17th floor a long time ago in the 1990s.

14 And I also want to acknowledge a couple of his career
15 accomplishments. He received the Presidential Meritorious Rank
16 Award in 2007, and before he joined the NRC, he was a nuclear trained
17 submarine officer and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy.

18 He retired from the Naval Reserve as a Commander,
19 and I want to congratulate him on his new position, and we look forward
20 to working with you as we move forward to meet the challenges that we
21 know we have in front of us and that may come our way over the next
22 few years.

23 And I'm going to introduce Vic to say a few words in a
24 moment, but before I do that, I also want to take a moment to thank
25 Mark Satorius for the time he spent as EDO and for his service and
26 dedication to the NRC over a career.

1 He's another one I got to know sort of in the middle
2 range of my career when he worked in the Office of Enforcement in the
3 EDO's office. He's been the EDO, of course, for the last two years or
4 so, and has served this agency well. He, like Vic, has had a long
5 tenure with the NRC, joining the NRC in 1989.

6 And he also served as a Regional Administrator in
7 Region III outside Chicago, and he's also seen a lot of the agency
8 before he became the EDO. And again, Mark also graduated from the
9 Naval Academy and served as a nuclear trained submarine officer, and
10 he retired from the Naval Reserve as a Captain.

11 We're fortunate as an agency to have such remarkable
12 people in leadership positions. And Mark, we'll miss you on the 17th
13 floor and around the building, and we wish you well in your retirement,
14 and I think we all should give Mark a great round of applause.

15 And one last announcement before I turn things over to
16 Vic, I'd like to also thank Brian Sheron who is the head of - currently the
17 Head of Research of the Director of Research for his long career of
18 accomplishment over 40 years here in the federal service, and his
19 leadership at the NRC.

20 We'll miss Brian. He recently informed us of his plan
21 to retire in early November, and we wish him a successful and
22 rewarding post-NRC experience.

23 And I know on the hearts and minds of many of us but -
24 is the passing of two recent employees here at the agency, and I just
25 want to take a moment to acknowledge them and have us reflect on
26 their loss, but more importantly, their contribution to the NRC.

1 Dr. Ralph Landry died last Monday, who had started at
2 the NRC back in 1974 - actually that would have been starting with the
3 AEC in 1974 - and was a nationally and internationally recognized
4 expert on reactor safety analysis, and we mourn his passing.

5 And then I learned that just this past weekend, Judge
6 Alan Rosenthal, who served on both the Atomic Safety and Licensing
7 Board Panel, but had also been the Chair of the Atomic Safety and
8 Licensing Appeal Panel, which was actually abolished in 1991, but
9 Judge Rosenthal continued on the ASLBP.

10 Judge Rosenthal passed away on Friday. And again,
11 this is a testament to a remarkable career of service to his country.
12 Some of you may know that he actually was on the government briefs in
13 the famous Brown v. Board of Education case in 1954 that ended the
14 separate but equal doctrine in Plessy v. Ferguson, and basically
15 unleashed, I think, the forces for good in terms of civil rights in this
16 country.

17 And so his long service as a lawyer to this country, but
18 particularly to this agency and to its work, I think is also to be reminded.
19 So I ask you all to keep them and their families in your hearts as we
20 reflect on their service, both Dr. Landry and Judge Rosenthal.

21 So with that, I would like to ask Vic to come to the
22 stand, and he's going to talk. Before we begin our questions and
23 answers and our other comments from the Commissioners, I'd like to
24 welcome Vic, and he's going to give us a few remarks here.

25 MR. McCREE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
26 Commissioners. Good afternoon, everyone. It's great to see you all

1 here today and you look great, and welcome to the 24th Annual All
2 Employees Meeting of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Staff and
3 the Commission. This is a public meeting, so I would also like to
4 welcome any members of the public and the media who are with us
5 today.

6 Let me begin by saying how thankful and honored I am
7 that the Commission has allowed me the privilege to serve as the
8 Executive Director for Operations. I'm even more excited and proud to
9 have the opportunity to continue to work with each of you.

10 I've had the pleasure of working closely with many of
11 you, and I have a very high regard for your competence, your
12 professionalism, and your commitment to our safety and security
13 mission. You are the reason why we are such a great place to work,
14 and I am grateful to serve with you.

15 As we gather here today for the All Employees
16 Meeting, our current fiscal year will end in three days on September 30.
17 We remain optimistic that Congress will sign - will enact an
18 appropriation bill and that the President will sign it by the end of the day
19 on Wednesday.

20 We are participating in daily calls with other agencies
21 and departments to ensure that the NRC is ready if a lapse of
22 appropriations occurs.

23 As Mark Satorius reported last week, we have
24 sufficient funds to allow the agency to continue to operate for several
25 days into the new fiscal year, but less than we had last time we
26 experienced a lapse in 2013.

1 Last Friday, we posted the agency's contingency plan
2 and management directive 4.5 which we recently updated based on the
3 lessons learned from the last shutdown. Please know that we
4 recognize the current budget uncertainty puts you in a difficult situation,
5 and the senior leadership team will continue to keep you informed and
6 support you during this period.

7 If you read the announcement about my appointment
8 as EDO, you may have noticed that I've had the opportunity to work in
9 several offices and headquarters in Region II for the past 27 years.

10 And among the many things I've learned in that time is
11 that whenever the NRC has faced challenges and uncertainty as we do
12 today, we were successful when we were clear about our priorities, our
13 mission, our people, our values, and our communications.

14 So to enable success, I encourage you to continue to
15 focus on these priorities. We should do our work in a way that ensures
16 nuclear safety and security. Our mission remains our highest priority,
17 and to do so in a manner that's consistent with our principles of good
18 regulation, independence, clarity, openness, reliability, and efficiency.

19 We should recognize that our people are our most
20 important asset. They get the job done. We must continue to invest
21 in people resources to ensure that we're able to well and faithfully fulfill
22 our mission.

23 We should continue to demonstrate and reinforce our
24 organizational values, integrity, service, openness, cooperation,
25 commitment, excellence, and respect. Yes, our behavior does matter,
26 and our values are the cornerstone of good behavior. We should

1 communicate well. It is vital that we do so.

2 We should actively and openly engage one another as
3 well as our external stakeholders to create a shared understanding and
4 to make good decisions. When we focus on these priorities, whatever
5 the challenge, I believe we will succeed and realize that the best is yet
6 to come.

7 As the Chairman mentioned, in my discussions with
8 the Commission, I recommended changes to a number of senior
9 executive positions, as well as a change in the organizational structure
10 of the Office of the Executive Director for Operations.

11 The recommendations were inspired by our desire to
12 support agency streamlining efforts, nurture fresh perspectives and
13 innovation, enhance learning and collaboration, both across business
14 lines and between headquarters offices and the regions, increase the
15 breadth and diversity of our experience among the senior leadership
16 team, and finally, support healthy succession planning.

17 With this in mind, I want to briefly share the
18 Commission's approval of the following senior leadership assignments:
19 Mike Weber, the Executive Director - excuse me, the Deputy Executive
20 Director for Materials, Waste, Research, State, Tribal, and Compliance
21 Programs will assume the Director, Office of Nuclear Regulatory
22 Research position in early November. I have also asked Mike to
23 continue serving on the Project Aim Steering Committee for a period of
24 time because of his important leadership of that project.

25 Jennifer Uhle, the Director for Engineering, Office of
26 Nuclear Reactor Regulation will assume the Director, Office of New

1 Reactors role in early November.

2 Marc Dapas, the Regional Administrator in Region IV
3 will assume the Director, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and
4 Safeguards position in the summer of 2016.

5 In addition, effective in early November, Glenn Tracy,
6 currently the Director, Office of New Reactors, will assume the new role
7 of the Deputy Executive Director for Materials, or DEDM position, which
8 will include leadership of our Materials, Research, State, Tribal,
9 Compliance, Administration, and Human Capital Programs.

10 This change supports streamlining the Office of the
11 EDO, reducing one deputy EDO position, and moving the Office of
12 Administration and Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer under
13 Glenn's position.

14 Darren Ash will continue to serve as the Chief
15 Information Officer, and will report directly to me. With this change, the
16 Office of Information Services will be retitled the Office of the Chief
17 Information Officer.

18 Jim Flannigan, who served as the Director, Office of
19 Information Services and Deputy Chief Information Officer, will continue
20 to serve as the Deputy Chief Information Officer.

21 Tom Rich, Director, Computer Security Office, will
22 continue to report to the Chief Information Officer, and these changes
23 will also become effective in early November.

24 Cathy Haney, currently the Director, Nuclear Material
25 Safety and Safeguards, will assume the position of Region II Regional
26 Administrator effective January 2016.

1 Kriss Kennedy, currently the Regional Administrator,
2 excuse me, the Deputy Regional Administrator in Region IV, will
3 assume the position of Regional Administrator in Region IV in the
4 summer of 2016.

5 Finally, Scott Morris, currently the Director, Division of
6 Inspection and Regional Support and the Office of Nuclear Reactor
7 Regulation, will assume the position of Deputy Regional Administrator
8 in Region IV in the summer of 2016.

9 Each of these executives has served the agency for a
10 number of years in challenging roles, and they bring a tremendous
11 amount of knowledge and experience to their new positions.

12 These are just some of the leadership changes that I believe
13 will best position the agency to meet the demands of our current and
14 future environment, while effectively and efficiently carrying out our
15 safety and security mission. So please join me in congratulating each
16 of these leaders for taking on these important and challenging new
17 roles.

18 Once again, I'd like to thank each of you for attending
19 today's meeting. I'd also like to thank Chairman Burns and
20 Commissioners Svinicki, Ostendorff, and Baran for taking the time to
21 meet with us and discuss topics that are of great interest to us all.

22 We truly value this opportunity to interact with the
23 Commission, and on behalf of the staff, I thank the Commission for your
24 continued support for this important opportunity to learn and engage.

25 In addition to those of us here in Rockville, our
26 colleagues in the Regions and the technical training center are viewing

1 this meeting via live web streaming so that they, and other folks who are
2 working remotely, can participate in this meeting.

3 The purpose of this All Hands Meeting is to facilitate
4 communications between the Commission and the staff, and for the
5 Commission members to share their perspective on NRC's
6 accomplishments and challenges. The Chairman and each of the
7 Commissioners will begin the meeting with individual remarks, and the
8 remainder of the meeting is reserved for questions and answers.

9 This is an excellent opportunity to interact directly with
10 the Commission regarding agency policy and strategy matters. If
11 asked, I'm sure each of them would say no topic is too sensitive to be
12 raised, and no question offered in a manner that reflects their values is
13 off limits. I hope I'm correct in that regard.

14 There are several microphones, as you can see,
15 around the ballroom for your use in asking questions. We've also
16 handed out cards, I think they're little yellow cards, if you'd prefer to
17 write your question.

18 You can pass it to one of the volunteer staff and these
19 questions, in addition to those that are phoned in, faxed in, or emailed
20 from the Regions and other sites, will be read by our volunteers.

21 Speaking of which, I'd like to say thank you for the
22 volunteer readers today. They are Nancy Turner Boyd. Where are
23 you, Nancy? She's somewhere. Oh, there she is right there.
24 Woody Machalek, is Woody here? I don't see him. Chelsea Nichols,
25 okay, great, Chelsea, thank you. And Kate Raynor, okay, maybe she's
26 around somewhere.

1 Thank you also to the volunteer ushers who are
2 helping today, our sign language interpreter, and the Office of the
3 Secretary, the Chief Human Capital Officer, Administration, and
4 Information Services for their efforts to organize and provide technical
5 and logistical support for today's meeting.

6 To minimize distractions, I'd ask that you please power
7 off or silence your cell phones, smart watches, or pagers if you still have
8 one.

9 Finally, I'd also like to recognize the
10 officials of the National Treasury Employees Union who are here with
11 us today, and you will have an opportunity to address us near the
12 conclusion of the meeting.

13 It is now my privilege to turn the meeting back over to
14 Chairman Burns.

15 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks, Vic. Before we begin,
16 I'm just going to make a couple of brief comments and then turn it over
17 to my fellow Commissioners for any opening remarks they'd like to
18 make. It's been about a year since I finished the confirmation process,
19 and not quite a year since I came back to the NRC after having left after
20 retiring, if you will.

21 And you know, I come back to the experience of some
22 challenges before us, some of which the agency was taking on in good
23 stead before I got back, and particularly as we talk a lot about Project
24 Aim and moving forward in that area.

25 We've got Project Aim, our rebaselining effort, and
26 we've got some budget and resource issues. You know, we've heard
about the concern about a possible government shutdown in addition to

1 what I'll call the real challenges we have, and that is doing our everyday
2 safety and security mission and making sure that we serve the
3 American people well.

4 Looking back over a career, there are a lot of
5 circumstances I can think of where the agency has been in similar
6 challenging times, and of course it makes it all the more interesting
7 sometimes to work through some of those problems to come up with
8 some creative solutions to doing things better, to trying to make
9 ourselves or maintain our effectiveness, and maintain the credibility that
10 we have.

11 And so, I think part of what we're in now, particularly
12 with Project Aim, is this good opportunity to take a hard look at
13 ourselves, a hard and honest look at what we're doing, and why we're
14 doing it, and how we're doing it, and asking ourselves, "Are we doing
15 the right thing for the right reasons at the right time?"

16 We can and we will right size, if you will. We can and
17 will manage our budget in a responsible way. We can and will
18 continue to serve the American people with the mission with which
19 we've been entrusted.

20 I have every confidence in our ability together as an
21 agency to do that, and your ability as employees of this agency to meet
22 the challenges and to thrive. As I say, we can do this. We have done
23 this.

24 One of, I think, the remarkable strengths of this agency
25 is the ability to learn from its experience, and that's something I know
26 over the years I've always found really a great aspect of working here,

1 and also understanding how we adapt to circumstances in front of us.

2 Coming from the international community over the last
3 three years or so, I can confirm for you that we are held in high esteem
4 in the international community. People may not do things the way we
5 do them for various reasons in terms of their approaches. You know,
6 the regulatory systems differ somewhat.

7 The approaches to undertaking safety regulation may
8 differ. They may not have as broad of a mandate as we do. But we
9 are respected, and people want to know why we do things and how we
10 do things, and that's because we have committed ourselves to doing
11 them well and to continue doing them well.

12 So with that, I'm going to turn it over to my fellow
13 Commissioners for some opening remarks, but I look forward to
14 engaging in the conversation from this side of the table.
15 Commissioner Svinicki?

16 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Well, good afternoon
17 everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to be here. I do think this is a
18 very significant opportunity that we have once a year to get together.
19 The room looks more full to me this year than it has the last few years.

20 I think that might have something to do with interest in
21 Victor McCree's comments maybe more than mine, but I do want to
22 congratulate Victor on his term as EDO. But I really want to thank
23 Mark for all of the work that he has done and again, positioning us in the
24 great shape that we're in right now to take on challenges in the coming
25 years.

26 And I also want to commend Dr. Sheron, or I should

1 say, Brian, because maybe in some of the time remaining, as I always
2 call him Dr. Sheron, and he says, "Would you please call me Brian?"
3 and I just can't, but maybe I'll try between now and your retirement
4 ceremony, or maybe I'll just do it at your retirement ceremony and that
5 will be my parting gift to you is that I'll call you Brian one time.

6 I guess, you know, Victor and the Chairman - oh, and I
7 call Vic, Vic. I know you prefer Vic. I just, I call you Victor and I think
8 that makes you feel like you're in trouble, but I can't help it. He said
9 that - he told me that his wife calls him Victor, so I just, I think it's a
10 beautiful name so I call him Victor.

11 But Victor has talked about, and the Chairman, of this
12 very macro perspective. I'm more focused right in this moment on the
13 immediate. And we hear about these changes, the changes, the very
14 constructive changes that Victor has proposed and that we're moving
15 forward with, but change has been the real constant here.

16 This is, if I'm counting right, my eighth All Hands
17 Meeting here at NRC, and it's interesting that this is the longest in my
18 career that I've had a job that had the exact same scope. I've been
19 with organizations longer than eight years, but I've had the same set of
20 responsibilities.

21 So when I reflect on change, you know, change is a
22 constant, but that doesn't mean you reconcile yourself to it. It doesn't
23 mean that you always enjoy it. I think there can be change for
24 change's sake, which I'm not supportive of. I told a story last
25 week at our Commission meeting about one of my periods of time at the
26 Department of Energy when I worked there out in Idaho, and in five

1 years I was reorganized four times, and I think some of that change
2 might have been for change's sake or for new leadership.

3 But the NRC has embarked upon something very
4 different here, and I know that there can be a tendency to look at Project
5 Aim and say it's somehow about doing more with less, or maybe at the
6 end of the day making us less than we were. I - this is not a marketing
7 piece. I legitimately just do not see it that way.

8 I think that Aim is about making us more than what we
9 were. And I think that if - you know, maybe it's having the same job for
10 eight years, but if I didn't, you know, think every day that I could
11 somehow come in and be smarter and better, then I think I would lose a
12 key part of my motivation of coming in every day.

13 I really just have to believe that about my day to day
14 responsibilities. And I think that what's true of people can be true of
15 organizations as well. There's always the chance to say you know, I
16 never thought we were as smart about that as we could have been, and
17 maybe out of the ten steps that we follow, three of them aren't adding
18 very much value.

19 So I think that this is an opportunity to be better, to be
20 more, and I approach it in that spirit. I think each of us will have our
21 own experience with Project Aim, but I'm coming at it that way.

22 And in that way, although there's change and it's
23 bittersweet, it is also an opportunity, I think, to be a little bit excited
24 about it, and have the organization not only listen to your suggestions,
25 but solicit them, and welcome them.

26 And so I think there will be challenges, but I think we've

1 also embarked on something kind of exciting if we approach it in that
2 spirit. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Good afternoon.
4 Mark, I want to thank you for your ongoing dedication to this agency and
5 your strong sense of service to our country. We've been the
6 beneficiaries of many years of your full-time 24/7 efforts and we
7 appreciate that.

8 Brian, I also add that accolade to you, Dr. Brian
9 Sheron, and all that you've done for the NRC, and just you are leaving
10 behind an extremely rich legacy, not just in the Office of Research or in
11 other offices you have served in, but throughout the entire agency and
12 the industry.

13 Victor, congratulations. I note that you're on day one
14 of the job and you've not wasted any time in your forceful backup in
15 initiating trash talk with me before this session started, and recounting
16 yesterday the victory of the Atlanta Falcons, his team, over my Dallas
17 Cowboys. So just, Victor, so you know, I'm watching. I'm keeping a
18 book here, so I've got you down for one. Congratulations.

19 I want to associate myself with the comments of
20 Commissioner Svinicki and Chairman Burns on Project Aim. I
21 completely agree with what both of them have said. I've had similar
22 experiences serving in the Department of Defense, Department of
23 Energy, and this is a great opportunity to shape this agency for the
24 future.

25 Mark Satorius and Mike Weber got us kicked off on this
26 almost a year and a half ago, and I think we're on a great trajectory.

1 It's a good thing. Not every agency gets a chance to do this. We do,
2 and I think it's great.

3 Finally, to the NRC staff, I want to just acknowledge
4 your continued professionalism and the strong reputation you have
5 professionally inside the agency, inside the United States government,
6 and overseas.

7 Not a day goes by without a chance to remark upon
8 your strong professional work ethic, and you're living the principles of
9 the good regulation that we have as an agency. It's a privilege for me
10 to serve alongside you. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Commissioner Baran?

12 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Thank you, and thanks to
13 everyone for being here today. I'm kind of blinded by these lights, but I
14 trust that you're out there. I think you are. I saw you when I came in.

15 I want to start by joining my colleagues in thanking and
16 recognizing Mark for his many years of federal and NRC service. He
17 has definitely earned some downtime. And that obviously applies to
18 Brian as well. Thank you, Brian.

19 I want to join them as well in congratulating Vic on his
20 selection as our new EDO. I know that he will do a terrific job. Vic
21 has, as many of you probably know must better than I, has the
22 leadership ability to ensure that the Project Aim efforts are a success
23 while keeping us all focused on our mission of protecting public health
24 and safety.

25 As a first step, Vic has proposed a number of
26 organizational and senior management changes. I think change can

1 re-energize an agency and generate new perspectives and ideas, and I
2 support Vic in assembling this team. I look forward to working with
3 everyone in their new positions.

4 This is my first All Employees Meeting. When I
5 started last October, I just missed last year's meeting by a couple of
6 weeks. So I guess this means I've been - I've had all year to prepare
7 for this. I don't know. We'll see how it goes.

8 I've really enjoyed my first year at NRC. As
9 Commissioners, we get to work on a steady stream of important and
10 interesting issues like all of you do, and I've learned a lot from all of you,
11 from my colleagues, and from my visits to sites around the country.

12 For most of my time here at NRC, we've been down a
13 commissioner. But the four of us who are here have worked really well
14 together, and I know we'll continue to do so. I think our wide range of
15 experiences and perspectives has been really valuable.

16 We each cast a couple of hundred votes, I guess, each
17 year, and oftentimes we agree, and even when we don't, when we have
18 different views on a policy matter, we have good, constructive
19 discussions. So I just want to take this opportunity to express my
20 appreciation to my fellow Commissioners for that and for all that you do.

21 I'm sure we'll get to a number of questions today on
22 Project Aim, but I want to just make one opening comment about this
23 effort. I know that big changes can be stressful and challenging, and it
24 can be hard to find the time to contribute to these efforts while still
25 getting all of your regular work done.

26 But I hope you also view Project Aim as an opportunity

1 to improve the agency in ways that will make it a better place for you to
2 work, and to help ensure we're focused on the right safety priorities.
3 More streamlined internal processes can boost efficiency, but they can
4 also enhance your day to day work life.

5 So I encourage folks to get personally engaged in
6 these efforts and bring some positive energy to them. Thank you all
7 for your hard work and dedication, and I look forward to your thoughts
8 and questions. Thanks.

9 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Okay, now it's time to hear from
10 you, and we'll be pleased to start off the questioning, and somebody
11 help me out here in terms of - there we are. Okay, there we go.

12 READER: What are your thoughts on the agency's
13 relationship with Congress, and what can we do to further improve it?

14 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I think for my own, and I'll
15 let my colleagues speak as well, our relationship is a very important one
16 since the Congress has, essentially, Constitutionally founded oversight
17 responsibilities with respect to the agency, and is also the source of our
18 - the appropriations that fund us.

19 So I think establishing good relationships with the
20 Congress, being responsive to information requests, the reasonable
21 information requests that we get, as we can are an important thing.
22 I've been trying in my first year here to do some drop-in visits with
23 members on both sides of the aisle, with our committee chairs, and also
24 ranking members as I can.

25 And again, part of the formal process is the hearing
26 process itself, and again, trying to be straightforward in those hearings,

1 but also trying to be supportive in terms of being responsive to the
2 information requests and the like outside of that context I think is
3 important for me. I'll let any of my colleagues -

4 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I think Congress is
5 unanimous in wanting to have a successful NRC. The difficulty arises
6 in that they don't all agree on what that looks like, so we have this
7 dynamic tension that exists. But I find in my one on one engagement
8 with members of Congress that they really do want this agency to be
9 successful and to work well. And I think some of the
10 criticism that we get is a natural part of the separation of the branches of
11 the government and the fact that Congress does have an appropriate
12 oversight role over our work, and we're always going to be getting, I
13 think, tough questions and criticism, and I think that that's natural.

14 I can't envision a point in time at which an agency like
15 ours would not have people pushing back and asking tough questions.
16 I think that will always exist.

17 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I would add,
18 along with Commissioner Baran and Commission Svinicki, I had some
19 time as a staff person, as the Counsel to the House Armed Services
20 Committee on the Hill. I'd say the relationships are pretty good. Are
21 they perfect? No. Like any bell curve, you're going to have some
22 outliers in either direction.

23 And I agree completely with Commission Svinicki that
24 it's the function of, hey, we have the responsibility to answer some hard
25 questions when the people who are receiving those answers may have
26 very different viewpoints as to what is success or not.

1 And so, I think we are known as a professional group.
2 You have a great reputation on the Hill as an agency, and I see nothing
3 that would change that going forward.

4 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I hope this is an indication
5 of how it goes all afternoon because I don't really have too much to add
6 to that. My colleagues have covered it. I agree that Congress has a
7 really important oversight role, and it's one that can be very positive for
8 us as an agency because it's good, as we all know, to have folks asking
9 tough questions and to really think that through. So I think it's
10 important for us to be as responsive as we possibly can be to those
11 questions and to requests for information.

12 Sometimes there are challenges with a specific
13 request or particularly sensitive information, and we should work
14 through those issues as best we can with the requesting committee or
15 member, and so I think that's an area where there's going to continue to
16 be focus and there's always room for improvement. We should stay
17 focused on that.

18 But I think it's valuable, and it's good for us as an
19 agency, and it's good for us to be asked those tough questions and
20 provide our thoughts.

21 READER: In 2013, Marvin Fertel, NEI, submitted a
22 letter noting that NRC should review and revise its furlough plans and
23 other responses to federal government shutdowns. NEI urged the
24 NRC to engage Congress and the administration to seek administrative
25 or legislative relief that would allow fee-based activity to continue during
26 a shutdown. Has the agency changed its latest shutdown policy and

1 response?

2 CHAIRMAN BURNS: There has been no additional
3 legislation or particular changes in policy I think essentially since 2013.
4 And again, one point I would emphasize is that the shutdown policies
5 and the furlough policies that are developed are actually largely driven
6 by the advice and direction provided by the Office of Management and
7 Budget and the Department of Justice with respect to what accepted or
8 essential functions are.

9 We have, I think, my understanding, and the General
10 Counsel's Office, and some of the staff offices, we have looked at some
11 things in that context, but essentially there isn't a change in direction or
12 policy since that time that I'm aware of.

13 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: If I can add, three
14 are two specific activities that we learned from last time that we have
15 taken into account, that is to allow the continued functioning of
16 construction resident inspectors as well as processing of fingerprints for
17 access authorization purposes. Those are two lessons learned from
18 the 2013 period.

19 COMMISSIONER BARAN: The only thing I would
20 just add to that, which is not a direct answer to this question, but I think
21 you all should just hear it, is that you know, this is kind of a legal
22 exercise for the agency about what accepted activities are and
23 functions are.

24 This is not a reflection of you and the work you're
25 doing. I mean, from my point of view, you are all essential, but that's -
26 that doesn't - that's not how - that's not the question that's asked when

1 we look at these issues.

2 But you should know that in our planning for those
3 types of eventualities, that's not an indication of the value that we or
4 anyone places on the work that you do every day.

5 READER: With the focus on reduced spending for
6 corporate resources, what is the agency's plan to ensure that it
7 maintains appropriately qualified staff in specialized areas such as
8 acquisitions, information technology, security, and financial
9 management?

10 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, in all functional areas,
11 and that's one of the, I think, one of the focuses within Project Aim as
12 well as looking at the types of work we need to do, and that's not just in
13 the technical areas, but across the board in terms of supporting our
14 mission.

15 So I expect as part of that, you know, part of that
16 dialogue and part of that evaluation, we look at - and as - I think as we
17 do, and I think OCHCO does with a cooperation of the offices in any
18 event in terms of key skill sets, areas in which we have challenges
19 coming up and the like.

20 That's a very general - I didn't realize that's a general
21 answer, but I think it holds true across the types of disciplines that we
22 may need to employ people.

23 READER: Last summer, the Commission issued an
24 international policy statement and directed the staff to develop a
25 five-year international strategy. How does the Commission envisage
26 the full integration of international activities into NRC's mission critical

1 work?

2 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I think that was the
3 purpose of the policy statement and the review that the Commission
4 had engaged in. I know it was completing at the time. I think
5 Commission Baran and I joined the Commission last fall.

6 But my sense is that we are doing what we thought we
7 wanted to do through that policy statement and through that initiative,
8 and that is ensuring an understanding of the integration of international
9 activities into our work.

10 I know from my own experience when I was at NEA a
11 few years ago, I used to run into people coming up in the elevator in my
12 office building in Paris who were there for meetings related to joint
13 projects where we're doing joint research on safety.

14 We have, for example, post-Fukushima, looking at
15 some of the learnings there. I know through the IAEA apart from the
16 major meetings like the general conference that I attended with some of
17 the staff a couple of weeks ago, we have ongoing engagement there.

18 So I - you know, my sense is that we are doing exactly
19 what we conceived of in the policy statement and in the direction the
20 Commission gave, and that is be engaged in the international
21 community. Feed that learning and experience that we receive from
22 outside of our country into our own programs, as well as push out the
23 values and also learning that we earn or learn here within the United
24 States.

25 READER: Please provide a status update for the
26 NRC request for buyout authority from OPM, and if OPM approves that

1 request, the schedule to implement it.

2 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I think we're still waiting for the
3 approvals in the OPM system. That's about all I can say at this point.
4 We're - basically we have the request and we're waiting to hear back
5 from them.

6 READER: If an international incident approaching or
7 exceeding Fukushima were to occur in the future, should NRC change
8 its role in responding to this incident, and if so, how? Additionally,
9 what parts of NRC's response should stay the same?

10 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I didn't hear the last part of that
11 question.

12 READER: Additionally, what parts of NRC's response
13 should stay the same?

14 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I think if there were to be
15 an incident on the order of Fukushima, there are many things I think
16 would probably be very similar, and that is trying to have an - in the first
17 instance, probably offering to provide assistance, which - where we can
18 if we're in a position to do so or it makes sense to those who may be
19 suffering the incident, assuming it's outside of this country.

20 I think the other part of it is, like the international
21 community, and like we have since Fukushima, Chernobyl, and the
22 Three Mile Island accident, is look in terms of what are the implications
23 for the U.S. nuclear fleet? So in that respect, I think what we'd do -
24 obviously specifics are going to differ, but I think in broadest terms,
25 that's how we would be engaged.

26 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I'd like to add that

1 I think NSIR, with respect to the interagency Fukushima lessons
2 learned efforts, has really done a solid job of looking at what internally
3 we have learned.

4 I'd also comment that I think it's a result of the
5 Fukushima lessons that the NRC has perhaps now a greater
6 appreciation for the need for us to communicate to other federal
7 agencies what we do and how we do it, and I think the staff, many of
8 you are involved in that, are doing just that right now, and I think that's
9 very constructive.

10 READER: In July, the President nominated Jessie
11 Hill Roberson to serve as an NRC Commissioner. What are your
12 thoughts on how the dynamic of the Commission will change with the
13 addition of the new Commissioner?

14 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I think it's a wait and see.
15 Obviously, you know, there is the old joke, and actually it's still good
16 with four commissioners, is - and this is a lawyer's joke, so, okay. It
17 says that the only math you needed to know was how to count to three.
18 I guess my jokes aren't as funny as they used to be.

19 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Well, at the least,
20 they're sounding a little ominous, so.

21 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I think what I'd say is of
23 course that's something the President nominates and the Senate needs
24 to act. That's true for all of us who are sitting up here. We had to go
25 through that process. At the risk of sounding like I've seen them come
26 and I've seen them go, it's true I'm on my fourth Chairman, and nobody

1 I started with is still serving on this Commission.

2 So I was reflecting on change. Change is the
3 constant here. And change may or may not come to you in your staff
4 position, but when you serve on this Commission, change is a constant.
5 So you will have colleagues who will finish their time and move onto
6 something else.

7 You will always be having new colleagues that are
8 arriving, and I think that that is a dynamic function that service on this
9 Commission requires us all to accommodate ourselves to that. So of
10 course we always - as I said, change is bittersweet. It's bitter when a
11 dear colleague decides that they're moving on to do something else.

12 We had some - Dr. McFarland took a wonderful
13 opportunity, so I was kind of shocked. I felt like I was the last to know
14 that she was leaving and stepping down as Chairman, but that means
15 that there's an opportunity to welcome a new colleague and establish
16 new constructive working relationships.

17 So the other thing that we model on this Commission,
18 and I think we're pretty open about it, Commissioner Baran was in his
19 opening remarks, is we're actually set up to have inherent
20 disagreement, so that is why our Commission is bipartisan under law,
21 and I don't think that it's anything that we run from.

22 I've been, you know, the loser on 4-1 votes. I got up
23 the next day and was partners with the same people who voted against
24 me. So I always like to remind staff that we have a very healthy
25 differing views program in this agency and a non-concurrence program.

26 The folks sitting up here on the stage, we engage in

1 that. On a daily basis we disagree with each other. So it's healthy.
2 It's good. The Congress intended it in setting up this Commission that
3 way, and I never -

4 What I will say personally, in all the changes and
5 colleagues that I've had over the years, I've learned that it's very
6 dangerous, and unfair, and wrong to presume things about people until
7 they come and you get a chance to meet them, and work with them, and
8 form your own opinion.

9 So I just, I make up my mind when I starting working
10 with somebody. I figure it's always - you got to start from that and build
11 up a working relationship.

12 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I will comment
13 that, and as Commissioner Baran noted in his opening remarks, I think
14 this Commission of four individuals right now is operating in an
15 extremely effective, high collegial, very friendly manner.

16 And even though we may not agree on all policy
17 matters, that's fine. That's why you have a commission. So I'm very
18 proud to be an associate of these three individuals to my left and right.
19 I think we're all functioning and performing our jobs the way we should
20 be.

21 That doesn't mean that I expect somebody to vote the
22 way I do or take exception if they do take a different position. That's
23 the strength of a commission.

24 I spent five months as the Acting Administrator at the
25 National Nuclear Security Administration from April through August of
26 2007, so I called all of the shots down there in the Forrestal Building for

1 NNSA a period of time.

2 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: And then you got here.

3 (Laughter)

4 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: In a different
5 environment. But I would say that the diversity of thought that goes
6 into decision making, the different opinions, and strategies, I personally
7 think this creates a much richer environment.

8 And quite frankly, the decision making may be
9 lengthier. It may not be as agile or as responsive time-wise, but at the
10 end of the day, I think it's far more strategic than it is in any of the other
11 places I've been, so I think this commission structure is something that
12 is of real strength to this agency.

13 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I completely agree with
14 that. And, you know, it would be great to get back up to five. I only
15 had that for about two and a half months. It was nice. Four is great
16 too. Four has been working very well, but five would be great.

17 I think every time you add someone new to the mix with
18 their own knowledge, and expertise, and experience, it just makes our
19 discussions at the commission level that much better.

20 It's, you know, we have, like, the main votes on things,
21 but then we still have to work out, you know, edits to SRMs and all of
22 these things. So in that regard, it's really nice to have an odd number
23 because even on really small things, it's good to be able to break a tie
24 when that occurs.

25 But we've done well, and I look forward to getting up to
26 five. But for as long as we have the folks we have, I think we'll continue

1 to get things done.

2 READER: What will happen if Project Aim does not
3 work, if it does not attain the desired improvements in efficiency?

4 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I'm going to answer that
5 question. I don't accept the premise of the question.

6 (Laughter)

7 CHAIRMAN BURNS: And I'm not going to accept the
8 premise of the question because I know the work that went into thinking
9 through Aim. As I said, it began, I think, a year ago this past summer
10 before I got back to the Commission. The Commission was well aware
11 of sort of the efforts to develop it.

12 We've taken responsibility in terms of looking at the
13 products that the staff team has come up with in terms of moving
14 forward. We put some other, what we - for us, I think, were checks and
15 balances, not so much as criticisms of the approach, but a way of
16 making sure that along the way we took those - we stopped at those
17 rest stops, took a chance to look at how we're going forward.

18 So as I say, I think we're on the right track. Will we
19 have a perfect record? Probably not. But I think we get most of it -
20 we're getting most of it right, and I think we're getting the important
21 things right.

22 READER: This question, there was multiple parts to
23 it, but you answered part of it with the question previously, so it's
24 regarding Project Aim. There are many significant changes being
25 proposed on a very short time line. Do you think we are taking
26 sufficient time to really examine the consequences of these changes?

1 What is the next biggest challenge that the Commission would like to
2 see in the next year?

3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I think we are - I think the
4 pace of what we're doing is appropriate, and I think we've gone into it.
5 I think both the staff leadership who presented it to the Commission, as
6 well as the Commission, have taken stock of what the sort of
7 progression, I guess you would call it, the progression of work is and the
8 scope of work.

9 It is ambitious, but from my perspective, and again, I
10 think talking with the staff leadership and my fellow Commissioners, is
11 that going at a fairly hardy pace is the right thing to do here.

12 Some of the next steps, we have some of the reports
13 on the rebaselining that are coming up and I don't have all of the dates
14 in my head, but I think that's an important aspect.

15 When we get through some of that rebaselining effort,
16 the OCHCO with this staff, with the individual offices, looking at the
17 staffing plans as we look forward, I think those are probably two of the
18 most significant things that are coming up.

19 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I would add, and
20 this also goes back to the previous question, I've got great confidence in
21 the career leadership of this agency and their ability to address Project
22 Aim efforts. Yes, there are a lot of moving parts there.

23 At the same time, I think the senior staff in this agency
24 is taking a very prudent, thoughtful, deep looking view at these steps,
25 and are integrating them across the agency in a constructive fashion.

26 So I'm not that worried about where we're going to end

1 up because I think we have really good people, and I'm looking out in
2 the audience here today, working on it. I would also comment that -
3 you kind of asked in the second question, you know, what's kind of the
4 next big piece?

5 And I think the Chairman hit on it - I'm just going to add
6 my voice to his - is the rebaselining effort. The rebaselining effort is
7 probably the centerpiece of Project Aim, and then it's over to Miriam
8 Cohen and her team to look at what's the work force strategy to execute
9 this redefined body of work?

10 It's hard, but it's not rocket science, and I think with the
11 communication that I see occurring across the agency, I'm very
12 confident we're going to end up in a good place.

13 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I would just add that I
14 think more likely than having something that would be termed an out
15 and out failure of Project Aim, it's more likely that Aim might deliver
16 uneven results across the organization, and I think that that's just a
17 reflection of practicality and human beings being involved. But if we
18 take it as stipulated, as a multi-year process, it is not a kind of a one
19 time through.

20 I don't know, maybe this is just me. I'm realizing this
21 as I answer this question this isn't really documented anywhere. But I
22 think if it goes out to 2020, there's an opportunity to iterate on some of it.

23 If something is successful in one organization, if
24 another organization did not encompass that in their rebaselining or
25 process improvement, there would be a chance to share those lessons
26 learned across the organization, and then perhaps that other

1 organization could come through and will come up with its own
2 suggestions and improvements.

3 So I think what is necessary is to get underway first of
4 all, in a very substantive way, and then to begin to have those
5 successes that can be shared and built upon across the organization.
6 So I think that that process of making uneven progress across all of
7 NRC's offices is more likely than anything that could be termed a failure.
8 I just don't see a failure happening.

9 COMMISSIONER BARAN: The only thing I would
10 add in terms of having a large number of moving parts, which is true,
11 there are - were a number of recommendations from the Project Aim
12 team that were approved and, you know, if you look at the
13 implementation schedule, there's a lot of things happening at the same
14 time or overlapping to some extent.

15 I think the thing to keep in mind about that though is so
16 many of those pieces are themselves processes with analysis, and
17 planning, and input. So if you're thinking about rebaselining, that's not
18 something that was kind of decided quickly.

19 It's going to be a process that hopefully all of you are
20 involved in, or strategic work force planning, or the development of a
21 plan for the eventual merger of NRR and NRO, or an examination of
22 potential additional centers of expertise, or potential changes to how we
23 do corporate support at the regional offices.

24 There are a lot of products and moving parts there, but
25 each one of these is going to involve a lot of additional analysis, and
26 thought, and feedback. And so I think that that should give folks some

1 comfort about, "Well, it's all happening at the same time. It's all
2 happening quickly."

3 These are really going to be deliberative processes,
4 and oftentimes are going to result in a paper that will come back up to
5 the Commission for additional consideration.

6 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: And I thank,
7 again, my colleague here for being - to think about providing some
8 examples of what is already happening. Let me provide three
9 examples that I think are substantive to demonstrate why we can and
10 will be successful.

11 I think Cathy - I'm not sure where Cathy Haney is.
12 Cathy, are you down there? Okay, so Cathy Haney and her team, and
13 Scott Morris - I saw Scott earlier today - did a great job, along with their
14 FSME counterparts, of doing the merger of NMSS and FSME.

15 That was not a small undertaking. Mike Weber was
16 involved in that in his DEDO capacity. I'm sure there were a couple of
17 bumps along the road that got solved, but we have shown we can do
18 that.

19 Bill Dean down here and his team were looking at
20 reducing the NRR licensing backlog. It's in place as we speak.
21 Progress is already being made. Glenn Tracy, NRO, he and Gary
22 Holahan, in the last two years have sent a lot of people from NRO to
23 NRR to work in different areas based on work load demands.

24 So a lot of the things that go to the heart of Project Aim
25 are already being demonstrated by senior leaders in this organization,
26 so that gives me a lot of confidence.

1 READER: With all of the focus to reduce staffing
2 levels, why hasn't there been any plan to reduce staff at the senior
3 executive level?

4 CHAIRMAN BURNS: We're at four commissioners
5 already, so we're at four.

6 (Laughter)

7 CHAIRMAN BURNS: With all respects to Dr.
8 Roberson. No, look, during a - and I worked through this when I was at
9 the General Counsel's Office and management positions. We go
10 through - I think we go through in this process of evaluating where we
11 are in terms of what our needs are, and I think we do look at means of,
12 where appropriate, reducing layers in terms of management and
13 supervisory control, but also looking at positions and whether they need
14 to be filled at an SES level or another type of level.

15 I can give you an example from my past experience.
16 As General Counsel, the Solicitor that had been an SES is now an SLS.
17 My main concern at that time was, "Was I going to be able to recruit the
18 right type of person into that position who provided sort of the quality
19 leadership in defending the agency in litigation?"

20 And I think that's a circumstance that turned out
21 successful, and that's what I expect, and I think that's what our senior
22 leadership asks of itself.

23 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I guess the only other thing
24 I'd add to that is just, you know, Vic's coming in really with a pretty bold
25 proposal about restructuring certain aspects of how his office would
26 operate in a lot of senior management moves.

1 And one of the things we've seen him announce today
2 is that we're going to go from three DEDOs to two DEDOs. So, that's
3 one example, I think, of the fact that this kind of evaluation really needs
4 to happen at all levels of the agency and I think that's already started.

5 READER: What is the status of the Two White Flint
6 North Replacement Lease set to expire December of 2018 and the
7 subsequent search for new space in Prince George's and Montgomery
8 Counties as stated in the Washington Business Journal?

9 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I think, Cindi, can you answer the
10 specifics with respect to the status of the Two White Flint facility lease
11 renewal?

12 MS. CARPENTER: We're on track right now for the
13 replacement lease on Two White Flint North. You're correct. The
14 lease right now was a five year extension and it goes until December of
15 2018 and we're on track for that.

16 So, we're working it through with the General Services
17 Administration. And I think right now that's the rest of this is
18 pre-decisional and I should -- yes, we're just moving it along.

19 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks.

20 READER: Regarding the agency's efforts to update 10
21 CFR Part 21, are you in favor of the rulemaking effort? And if not, why
22 not?

23 CHAIRMAN BURNS: The Commission, I think, has --
24 and we may have deferred in terms of looking at that issue.

25 We haven't made a decision on that issue and I know I
26 haven't looked at it closely enough to reach a decision one way or the

1 other. I had a lot of experience early in my career with Part 21.

2 You know, my questions would be primarily on
3 anything and in terms of any time we look at a change at our rules is,
4 what is it that we're doing in terms of enhancing the rules? What is -- is
5 there something essential here in terms of clarity or is basically can you
6 work within the framework? Is working within the framework of the
7 existing rule still get us to where we want to be?

8 Those are the types of questions I ask myself and
9 that's just -- it's, I think, we just aren't there yet with respect to making a
10 decision on that.

11 I don't know if my colleagues want to say anything.

12 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I haven't seen the final
13 form of the rebaselining guidance that's gone out to all participants in
14 the rebaselining. But it's my understanding, based on a draft I saw,
15 that all agency rulemaking activities will be evaluated in terms of not just
16 the high, medium and low priority that we assign them right now, but I
17 think all rulemaking activities will be considered as part of the
18 rebaselining.

19 And so, there's going to be probably a restacking of
20 priorities on at least some of them coming out of the rebaselining.

21 READER: This question addresses the NRC's
22 relationship with U.S. Department of Energy.

23 How will the Commission influence DOE on issues to
24 include Yucca Mountain Consolidated Interim Storage Facility and
25 development of new generation reactors?

26 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I don't think we have much

1 of an influence with respect to the question on Yucca Mountain that
2 essentially is an administration policy issue.

3 Again, I said in the context of some of the testimony,
4 other statements I've made, is with respect -- that we are the -- we have
5 been designated under Statute as the licensing agency authority should
6 a repository and the repository be pursued.

7 For us to engage in terms of advocacy one way or the
8 other with respect to Yucca from my standpoint isn't particularly
9 appropriate.

10 With respect to consolidated storage, I think some of
11 you know as we have interests from at least two companies are talking
12 about potential license applications for interim storage sites.

13 Again, there's been some question which, again, is
14 going to be primarily, I think, with lay in the lap of the Department of
15 Energy and also in terms of the Congress about whether there's some
16 sort of a relationship between those potential applicants and the
17 Department of Energy.

18 Next generation nuclear I think that's an area where
19 probably we have a greater cooperation from the standpoint of
20 advanced reactors or other types of looking at technology within our two
21 respective roles. The DOE more on the research and development
22 side and it has, you know, budgets to do that and us, again, on the
23 potentially on the licensing side that may be interested in some of the
24 research that the Department is doing.

25 Some of you may know, and this hotel, I think at the
26 other end of the hall earlier this month, we held a joint workshop with

1 DOE on advanced reactor technologies I think that was very well
2 received by the attendees and I think gave a good opportunity for NRC
3 and DOE to explain our respective roles and to also hear from the
4 audience there about some of the issues that they thought that the
5 Department or NRC might appropriately work on.

6 The one last thing I'll mention is I established sort of a
7 quarter -- I think on about a quarterly basis a meeting with Jon Kotek
8 who's the Acting Assistant Secretary there. He took over from Pete
9 Lyons, you know, any many of you know former Commissioner here at
10 the NRC. And just to make sure that we're communicating about
11 activities the Department may have and what's going on here as well.

12 So, it's an area in which, again, we may have an arm's
13 length relationship, appropriately so, on certain aspects, but we
14 certainly can learn from each other and understand what we're doing
15 and be pleased to hear any other comments from my colleagues.

16 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Okay, well, then I will.
17 I'll tell the story if nobody else will.

18 Interesting, if any of you tuned into the Commission's
19 testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee earlier
20 this month I think it was, a Member of Congress, Congressman Barton
21 of Texas, has in legislation he's either introduced or is proposing to
22 introduce regarding consolidated storage. And he kept asking us for
23 our opinion about it and NRC sometimes frustrates people because
24 we're very much by the book.

25 And so, what we wanted to testify to, was our role as
26 the safety regulator and the storage of spent fuel now, and, you know,

1 our determinations of the safety of it going forward.

2 And so, I think it finally went to Commissioner Baran
3 and I gave him a chance to tell this story, but he didn't tell it, but he said,
4 I think he began his answer with, well, that's really a policy
5 determination for the Congress and I think he solicited in that answer
6 then the only compliment we got the whole hearing which was that,
7 well, it's very refreshing to hear somebody from an agency say that, you
8 know, it is Congress's policy prerogative.

9 So I do appreciate that, Commissioner Baran. He
10 really swung for the fences on that one. He got us the only compliment
11 that we got at that hearing.

12 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I get the benefit of time
13 because, you know, everyone else gets to answer first and I get to sit
14 here and think, oh, well, what can I come up with? That's working for
15 me today, too.

16 CHAIRMAN BURNS: And with that, I'll ask for another
17 question.

18 READER: This is a question regarding the Oconee
19 Nuclear Power Plant.

20 Do you believe the Commission should request an
21 independent safety review similar to the review that was conducted a
22 few years ago for Maine Yankee?

23 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I'm familiar with the Maine
24 Yankee review. That was more than a few years ago, it was about two
25 decades ago in the mid-1990s.

26 And the circumstances that gave rise to that, I won't

1 elaborate here and I may probably wouldn't remember all of them at this
2 point in time.

3 But whether or not something like that, I would need to
4 talk with the senior management and NRR as well as -- well, probably in
5 the region as well before hazarding any kind of a judgment on that.

6 I think we determined -- I recognize there's some
7 issues that are with, you know, various plants here and there. There
8 may be some unique issues with respect to them.

9 But, you know, again, I think our, you know,
10 responsible folks have decided the plants are operating safely or are
11 under appropriate level of oversight or are being challenged on issues
12 where they need to be challenged.

13 So, I wouldn't want to hazard any kind of opinion
14 without sort of understanding more from senior staff.

15 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Yes, I'll speak generically
16 to the issue of independent safety evaluations.

17 This is something that comes up from time to time
18 when there's a performance issue at an operating plant. I can't speak
19 to the Maine Yankee circumstance.

20 But, I, as a general matter, have not supported
21 independent safety evaluations or other of that same thing going by
22 different terminology. My view, and it's only been fortified in my time
23 serving here as a Commissioner, is I have a strong confidence in the
24 rigor of the reactor oversight process that we have.

25 And if someone were to raise a circumstance to me
26 and make a case that somehow our reactor oversight process was not

1 applied correctly or there was some gap in it, then I would throw my
2 energy entirely into correcting that for every nuclear power plant in the
3 United States, not just for the people who live by one plant in some
4 community where they have raised an issue.

5 In my time serving here, no one has ever been able to
6 make a case to me that the ROP was somehow failing when it came to
7 its application at their plant.

8 So, but again, my -- I feel my obligation as a
9 Commissioner, and I'm sure that everyone here who works on this
10 issue feels the same way, is that if someone can point out a gap or an
11 error, we want to fix it systematically for the entire reactor oversight
12 process, not just do a one off ad hoc thing for one plant.

13 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I want to add my
14 voice to my colleagues here. I think this is a really important question.

15 I've not been here as long as Commissioner Svinicki
16 has, but I've gone through six Agency After Action Review Meetings,
17 the AAARM process, where our staff annually talks to the Commission
18 about the staff's findings and assessments of nuclear power plant
19 performance, materials facility performance, et cetera.

20 And I think the ROP process is very mature. I'd say
21 it's more mature than the programs I saw used to assess Department of
22 Defense facilities in my 26 years in uniform.

23 It's more mature than what I saw used by the
24 Department of Energy National Security Administration in assessing
25 nuclear weapons complex facilities. And, along with Commissioner
26 Svinicki's comments and the Chairman's comments, I think we have a

1 lot trust in that system.

2 I had a chance earlier this year, I visited the Arkansas I
3 plant with Marc Dapas back in April. I visited Pilgrim Plant in
4 Massachusetts with Dan Dorman in June, two Column 4 plants,
5 detailed hours of discussions with the Region IV and Region I teams
6 about their calculus as to how to assess performance in the required
7 inspection regime that should follow plant findings.

8 And I've got a lot of faith in the systems working well.
9 Is it perfect? Will somebody sometimes have a different opinion?
10 Absolutely. But as far as the overall functioning and mechanism of
11 that, I think the agency should be very proud of those systems.

12 And my hat's off to Mike Johnson, Bill Dean, their
13 teams and the regional administrators for, I think, having a very
14 professionally designed, predictable, stable process.

15 READER: Industry advocates, venture capitalists and
16 startup CEOs have criticized NRC's licensing process as being
17 expensive and risky and have advocated for a tiered approval process
18 as well as greater ability for NRC to advise the license applicants to
19 improve their applications.

20 Please address your thoughts on such a potential
21 change in licensing process.

22 CHAIRMAN BURNS: That was one of the issues, I
23 think, that was brought to the fore at the DOE NRC forum that we had a
24 few weeks ago.

25 And I think what's happening is with NRO, and I know
26 Glenn and Mike Mayfield and others have made themselves available

1 to talk to people, to make sure that there's an understanding of what our
2 process is.

3 But to also make sure that they understand that, from
4 their end, what's expected, and that there are places like topical reports,
5 or they may not use the same nomenclature as these step wise
6 approvals, but there are ways of engaging with the NRC that provide,
7 perhaps, the kinds of -- the greater certainty, granted steps less than a
8 full design certification or design or in effect licensing type approval.

9 That should get them on their way if they're serious
10 about pursuing these ideas beyond just a set of PowerPoint slides or an
11 idea on paper.

12 So, what I've tried to say and have said that in a
13 number of forums, I had to testify in front of one of our House
14 committees last month and we provided them information. We've,
15 again, had this workshop and in other means of engagement, try to
16 explore with folks who may be interested in going down these paths of
17 what we are -- what the limitations of what we can do, what we may not
18 do, make sure they understand in terms of their role in terms of
19 providing an application that addresses the engineering and safety and
20 other types of applicable criteria and then we can forward on it.

21 Again, to sort of close is, I think we can do this and I
22 don't think ultimately that some perceptions of the licensing process are
23 in effect the insurmountable hurdle to innovation.

24 READER: When will the NRC know if NRC staff have
25 accepted the buyout or if other personnel actions may be necessary
26 such as a reduction in force?

1 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Could you repeat the question?

2 READER: When will the NRC know if the NRC staff
3 have accepted the buyout and if other personnel actions may be
4 necessary such as a reduction in force?

5 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I think I'm -- well, we're still
6 waiting for OPM in terms of in effect a green light to go ahead with the
7 process. When that happens, I think there are particular time frames
8 that would be there.

9 Maybe Miriam -- I cannot hear you.

10 COMMISSIONER BARAN: We need to know what the
11 appropriation is from Congress.

12 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes, we need to -- right, that's
13 right. We need to know what the appropriation is.

14 So, right now, as they say, because we're in this sort in
15 between place.

16 COMMISSIONER BARAN: So, I guess the only thing
17 to say about that is there may be some additional uncertainty. Right?
18 So, the conversation right now on Capitol Hill is about a Continuing
19 Resolution through December 11th. And the odds of that look pretty
20 good, so probably in the next few days, we see a Continuing
21 Resolution, we're funded at least year's level until December 11th. But
22 then, Congress is going to have to figure what's the plan for the rest of
23 the fiscal year. We don't know the answer to that yet.

24 And, obviously, depending on what our level of funding
25 is that would just be a basic input into figuring out what our staffing
26 levels for that year look like.

1 READER: The NRC is facing numerous uncertainties,
2 including future budgets and the merger of NRO and NRR. Why are
3 we pursuing centers of expertise that will move staff around now
4 instead of waiting until the change leadership allows things to settle
5 down?

6 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, a part of the Aim
7 recommendations was to focus on potential use of centers of expertise.
8 And what we're doing at this point is looking at and evaluating that as an
9 option, as a way of basically leveraging resources within the agency.

10 Again, we can't operate in a perfect scenario where
11 everything is sort of clean and nothing is disruptive and we then
12 evaluate and act as it is. We have a lot, as I think Commissioner
13 Ostendorff said, we have a lot of moving parts here and we sort of forge
14 our way through. And at the time when we think it's appropriate, where
15 we think this can provide value, that's how we're going to move forward
16 with it.

17 And that's still, again, the centers of excellence, it's
18 something we're taking a look at and evaluating in terms of what it will
19 mean in terms of some value to the institution and making our work
20 more effective.

21 So, final decisions haven't been made on that, but are
22 part of the evaluative process.

23 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Beginning with my vote
24 on Project Aim and as recently as the Commission's public meeting last
25 week, I repeated some cautions that I have about the use of centers in
26 large organizations.

1 So, living the value of differences of opinion up here, it
2 is true that the Commission issued direction that the staff should
3 evaluate additional use of centers. We are receiving a paper I believe
4 in November with a set of recommendations from the staff, not the
5 entirety of what they might envision moving towards with centers, but at
6 least an initial set of steps.

7 My cautions revolve around the fact that they make
8 sense in some cases and they can be done well or they can be adopted
9 and not be terribly effective because you've not structured them in a
10 way where the people and the projects and the center make sense with
11 each other.

12 I've experience that in my career. I've seen how it can
13 be done very ineffectively. And I think when there's a lot of other
14 change, it can be turned to as a rapid solution, but it doesn't always
15 make sense.

16 So, I have been outspoken about a quick rush to
17 centers as an idea of how to organize. I don't think it aligns well with a
18 lot of the work we do here. I don't think that it necessarily makes sense
19 as a structure.

20 I will be reviewing the staff's recommendations in
21 November with that skepticism in mind.

22 COMMISSIONER BARAN: The only thing I would add
23 because the merger with NRR and NRO -- of NRR and NRO as
24 mentioned as part of that question is just without reaching any kind of
25 conclusion about centers of expertise and I'd also what to see what the
26 paper says in November. And there's a lot to think through there.

1 It may be that there are interactions between potential
2 centers of expertise and that merger. And so, I think, you know, while
3 we're contemplating and planning for that merger, I think it does make
4 sense in that same time frame to be thinking through what, if any,
5 additional centers we might want to move to.

6 READER: What are the top safety and security issues
7 currently faced by the NRC?

8 CHAIRMAN BURNS: That's a good question.

9 For my standpoint, the top safety issues really have to
10 do with us working through the post-Fukushima enhancements that the
11 agency adopted several years ago.

12 And, again, I think our main focus is, and I know the
13 staff leadership has been particularly focused on is moving through
14 those things, continuing to move through those things so that most of
15 the significant safety improvements will be done by the end of calendar
16 year 2016.

17 There are some exceptions that account for some
18 outages and some implementations or makes it smarter, in effect, to
19 allow some delay in implementation because the impact on different
20 projects at the same time that will ultimately give you the value.

21 So, from my standpoint, in the reactor area, that's
22 probably the most significant thing to do. And part of that, again,
23 maybe to go just a bit more granular, staff has done a lot of work in
24 terms of looking at and receiving from industry the seismic and flooding
25 reevaluations, working through those and seeing, you know, what the
26 outcome of those evaluations are and what does it mean for plant

1 safety in the nuclear area or in the nuclear reactor area is I think an
2 important thing.

3 In the materials area, we, I think, continue, and this has
4 the, you know, both the flavor of safety and security because I think
5 those of you working in the area know that the contribution that we do to
6 in terms of maintaining protection for safety also provides us significant
7 benefits in the security area.

8 And there's a lot of attention not only in this country but
9 worldwide on the continued security of sources and maintaining that.
10 We have a leadership role in this interagency group that meets every
11 several years. But also, in terms of our leadership with our partners in
12 the agreement states.

13 So, from my standpoint, that's probably an area where
14 we have, you know, a continued challenge at the front of our plate.

15 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I would just add to the
16 Chairman's answer by mentioning the ROP and the force on force.
17 Both are mature programs. In both cases, we are engaged in
18 improvement or enhancement initiatives or looking at mature programs.

19 That is always difficult work because you need to retain
20 what works well, but nothing is perfect in life and you have to be willing
21 to take a very candid and searching look about how programs can be
22 improved. Because, when you design them, you don't have all this
23 experience, so there's probably some things that you would do a little bit
24 differently.

25 So, I think that's a fairly complex piece of work is
26 looking at those two very mature programs and coming up with a set of

1 enhancements or recommendations of how they can be made better.

2 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: With respect to
3 safety, I would just comment, just my personal opinion, that the safety
4 enhancements that needed to be accomplished after Fukushima by
5 and large have already been decided by the Commission. That's my
6 personal view.

7 We're expecting the staff to come to the Commission at
8 the end of next month with their proposal to disposition remaining Tier
9 2, Tier 3 activities.

10 But the approval by the Commission of the mitigation of
11 beyond design basis event rulemaking was really a significant capstone
12 measure that melded a large number of disparate parts together into
13 one rulemaking to, I think, in large measure brings to an end to most of
14 the rulemaking associated with Fukushima.

15 I agree with Commissioner Svinicki's comments on
16 security, on the force on force. I think Brian Holian and Brian
17 McDermott with their force on force work tactics working groups and
18 their significance determination process changes, they've made some
19 important refinements to an already mature system.

20 I would just add that I think that there's a ways to go,
21 not to change requirements for cybersecurity, but just to implement
22 what's out there. It is much easier said than done. You know, I think
23 there's a lot of implementation that needs to occur on the cyber piece.

24 COMMISSIONER BARAN: When I heard the question,
25 I first thought on the reactor side on safety was what the Chairman
26 articulated about post-Fukushima enhancements. I think that's part of

1 the answer, at least for me.

2 The other thing I would specifically point to is the
3 inspection work that will be happening at ANO and Pilgrim. I think from
4 a safety point of view that is really at the very top of or near the very top
5 of the list of the safety work currently before the agency.

6 On security, I would highlight the expedited
7 cybersecurity rulemaking for fuel cycle facilities. I think that's very
8 important rulemaking and probably, as I'm sitting here, probably the
9 highest priority in terms of improvements on the security side for me.

10 READER: The latest senior executive service career
11 development program class was under represented by women and
12 minorities. Are there any efforts under way to address the underlying
13 cause of that or promote diversity among applicants and selectees in
14 that program?

15 CHAIRMAN BURNS: As the questioner noted, I think
16 there was some disappointment in terms of the makeup of the class.

17 What I would say is what we need to do is continue to
18 emphasize the programs we have in terms of development within the
19 agency, giving through OCHCO, through our partnership through SBR,
20 SBCR and the diversity committees in terms of lifting folks up, giving
21 them opportunity within the agency to look at the potential for
22 leadership positions and these leadership programs as they come
23 along.

24 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I'd like to add just
25 one comment and I discussed this with the EDO Mark Satorius and with
26 Miriam Cohen, and that is the important of this process resulting in

1 providing concrete feedback to the candidates after the process is
2 complete so people understand where their areas of improvement are
3 and where they could perhaps make some strides for the next round of
4 competition.

5 I believe that Mark and Miriam were very responsive to
6 that. That was ongoing, it's not something that required a
7 Commissioner discussion.

8 But I think the honest constructive feedback on
9 personnel, whenever you have a selection process, is vital.

10 READER: There has been a lot of press on the
11 cancellation of the cancer study. Can you comment on why it was
12 cancelled?

13 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, essentially, the letter I
14 know Brian Sheron wrote to NAS, and to some extent our press
15 release, addressed that. And essentially, it's really a matter of what
16 the results were -- or would be, not what the results were -- it's a study
17 looking forward in terms of what we would evaluate.

18 And I think the difficulty with the study scope was that
19 there was not a lot that was expected to come out of the study as
20 designed as it was.

21 So, it was not -- I know a lot of the press reports talk
22 about it in terms of merely money. I don't think -- it's not so much a
23 question of money, but what are outcomes. What do you expect to
24 get? Will you get any outcomes? And that's how I understand it in
25 terms of the decision that was made, the staff decision to not proceed
26 with the study.

1 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Well, let me add
2 that it's my understanding of some substantive problems with the study
3 as it was potentially going to be executed.

4 One, the study, and Brian Sheron can come correct me
5 if I get this wrong, but my understanding was the study was limited to
6 being along county lines and not being oriented within a certain radius
7 of existing nuclear facilities in particular areas of the country.

8 Two, the study dealt with mortality, lethality, not cancer
9 instance rates.

10 And, three, there was not a causal effect analysis
11 between radiation and what the health impact might be.

12 And I don't know that those particular shortcomings in
13 the study, if I have it correct, and I am very willing to be corrected on
14 that, but I think those substantive shortfalls in what study would result in
15 have not been fully articulated in the press.

16 READER: This question addresses the quality of
17 information provided to the Commission by staff.

18 Is the information we provide to you sufficient,
19 excessive? Do you read it? Are there opportunities to streamline any
20 of this information?

21 CHAIRMAN BURNS: What was the last part of that? I
22 missed that over the chuckle.

23 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: To streamline,
24 opportunities to streamline.

25 READER: Do you read it?

26 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Do I read it? Yes.

1 READER: Are there opportunities to streamline any of
2 this information?

3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I think that's a good
4 question.

5 Do I read it? Yes. Do I read every paper as
6 exactly as I do others? Probably no.

7 But the information that comes up from the staff is
8 extraordinarily important to informing me and I think probably can speak
9 here for my fellow Commissioners, in terms of informing us with respect
10 to actions that may come in front of us, those are policy matters or
11 rulemaking matters or in the adjudicatory matters that we have to
12 decide.

13 I think there's probably, and I -- there are probably
14 ways -- and this, again, this may well be a matter of personal
15 preferences, I would say that there are probably always opportunities to
16 look at how information's streamlined. It's like the old Mark Twain, you
17 know, Mark Twain story that said if I had more time, I would have written
18 you a shorter letter.

19 And I don't fault the staff in that regard. There's a lot
20 of information in there and you're -- and, you know, we have deadlines.
21 There's the need to get important decision making documents to the
22 Commission at a particular point in time.

23 So, you know, being fulsome in terms of the
24 discussion, I think that's important.

25 Stepping back, sometimes, you know, I think it's
26 always worth, you know, do it by -- worth looking at, have how I -- is the

1 way in which I've communicated something the depth to which I've
2 covered something, is it enough or is it too much?

3 So, I'll leave that with sort of that vague challenge out
4 there.

5 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Well, I agree that the
6 information is really essential to the deliberative process to making a
7 decision.

8 Again, we are four people as whatever experience and
9 background we have, we can't out staff you. We cannot substitute for
10 all of the knowledge and capability that you bring.

11 I view my job as being a skeptic. Every paper I
12 approach saying, you know, you're recommending something, so
13 convince me. I don't do that to be argumentative. It's, again, I think
14 the role of the Commission is to be asking those tough questions and
15 pushing back.

16 So, I think you want to think about including things that
17 make your case and make it strongly and make it well. There might be
18 colleagues you have that have a differing view. I think we do a good
19 job of including a balanced discussion in the paper.

20 If there's cases where staff felt they didn't get to include
21 something in the paper, I have occasionally gotten emails from staff
22 members with additional information that they've asked me and my
23 colleagues to consider as we deliberate. I generally response by
24 saying thanks for sending that, I'll add that to my package of materials
25 that I'm reviewing.

26 I do read it. I think sometimes that's why I'm pulling up

1 the rear in terms of voting on stuff. And we also have the opportunity
2 then to engage. You know, there's a principle originator and author on
3 the cover sheet of the voting papers that we receive. So, you can start
4 there, but you can also ask for briefings by other members of the NRC
5 staff that have contributed. You can ask for briefings from people who
6 didn't agree with the recommendation in the paper.

7 So, all of that is available to us. But, often, it is that
8 you are helping us as decision makers become comfortable with
9 something. Please don't give short shrift to what it might take to give
10 us the background, to give us all of the compelling analysis and results.

11 So, I know that we are looking for streamlining. The
12 Commission, you know, you think sometimes that if you give decision
13 makers less they'll make decisions more quickly. In general, my
14 experience for myself and other people I've served with on this
15 Commission is this is a technical agency. If you give us less
16 information, we are not comfortable enough to vote yes or no, and,
17 therefore, a poorly written paper, in my view, takes longer to get a
18 Commission decision than a well written paper.

19 And so, include in there what it is you think you need to
20 make your case because, again, if you feel like you don't know enough
21 information, I think we all encounter this even in our family life, if you
22 feel like you haven't been told enough about the circumstance, you're
23 not going to say yes or no, you're just going to go well, you know, I'm
24 going to get back to you on that.

25 So, that's my thought process on papers.

26 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes, I do read it. I

1 think in some cases, as far as streamlining is concerned, the area that I
2 think in Project Aim will probably get to this, there might be
3 opportunities to maybe look at a decreased periodicity of certain reports
4 coming forward to the Commission, but I think that doesn't lessen the
5 overall informing aspect of keeping the Commission informed. Maybe
6 it's every six months as opposed to quarterly, there may be some
7 opportunities to do that.

8 I agree with Commissioner Svinicki on the SECY
9 papers that come to us, it's important that those perhaps err on the side
10 of more rather than less information. In many cases, you might have
11 been here with the agency for 10, 20 or 30 years, a Commissioner may
12 have been here for one, five or eight years, you know, we may not have
13 the corporate perspective that you might have on a given issue, so don't
14 assume we understand the history of a particular topic.

15 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Yes, I think I agree with all
16 of that. I do read the materials like my colleagues do. And there are
17 times I read it and I say, wow, that was really short and then there are
18 times I read it and I say, wow, that was way too long.

19 And so, there's no one answer to this. But I think, on
20 the SECY papers, this isn't to say that people aren't thoughtful about
21 what gets in there, but, you know, rather than having a, you know, a
22 magic formula about how precisely how long a paper to the
23 Commission should be, you know, I think it's important to really be
24 thoughtful about what is the information that would be useful to us in
25 evaluating recommendations or thinking through the issues.

26 And, sometimes, I've seen issues where two or three

1 pages is plenty and I've seen issues where ten pages is not nearly
2 enough. And so, I think that, you know, that's a challenge. There's no
3 -- it's not a science, it's not a formula that spits out at the right page
4 number.

5 But I think, as my colleagues have indicated, really
6 thinking through what is the background, what is the information that is
7 going to be most useful to the Commissioners, is really helpful because
8 in this -- you know, sometimes we'll get briefings with staff even when
9 the paper's really good and really comprehensive because it's just a
10 really tough issue. We want to learn more and think through
11 possibilities and question staff about things.

12 Sometimes we do, you know, follow up briefings
13 because we didn't get enough information in the paper, and, you know,
14 we have our staffs seek additional information and we may, you know,
15 do it at the Commissioner level to get additional information.

16 So, there's no one good answer to that, but I think
17 being thoughtful is important.

18 One trend I wanted to comment on that I've seen
19 recently and I think is really positive is we've seen several, I think,
20 SECY papers come up that go out of their way to discuss any differing
21 views among the staff on it.

22 So, you know, we've seen some papers where we'll
23 have non-concurrences and that's great for folks to use that process.
24 I've always found it very helpful when I've gotten the opportunity to read
25 non-concurrences.

26 But I think there's been an effort on some papers to

1 kind of fold some of that in and provide the full array of staff views, or at
2 least an array of staff views on the topic and on the recommendations.
3 And I think that's really useful because just hearing where different folks
4 are and why they would recommend one thing or the other, I find really
5 helpful as when I'm trying to think through, you know, what I would
6 decide on a recommendation.

7 READER: What are the top five priorities for the
8 Commission in fiscal year '16?

9 CHAIRMAN BURNS: I'm not even sure as a body we
10 have ranked particular priorities. We've been talking about a number
11 of them, at least from my perspective. And I'll let my colleagues chime
12 in that I think are priorities for us.

13 We've talked about Project Aim a lot this afternoon.
14 And so, working through some of the papers we expect to get.

15 As Commissioner Svinicki noted, the one on the
16 centers of excellence, the rebaselining, add/shed process, I think those
17 are top -- that's a top priority. I mentioned in terms of some of the
18 substantive safety work, again, keeping on track with the
19 post-Fukushima enhancements.

20 Commissioner Ostendorff mentioned that included
21 with the plant specific items we have, we have the significant
22 rulemaking with is a significant achievement that culminated a lot of the
23 work that both Commissioner Svinicki and Commissioner Ostendorff
24 started in the aftermath of the accident when the agency was looking at
25 what steps it should take.

26 So, that's two of them.

1 I, again, keeping from my standpoint, maintaining our
2 credibility with our, you know, oversight on the Hill with both our
3 appropriators and with those that like -- our appropriators as well as our
4 other oversight committees, I think that's appropriate, being responsive
5 in terms of making sure that they understand our programs, understand
6 why we ask for the budgets we ask for, things like that.

7 So, those are three. I'll ask my colleagues to help me
8 out maybe with two more if there are.

9 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I don't really structure my
10 thinking about my work in terms of priorities. There are jobs where you
11 have kind of more control over your priority setting month to month and
12 year to year.

13 But at least it happened to me, and I think sometimes
14 jobs like ours, you come in, people ask you, well, you know, what are
15 going to be your priorities? I'm sure the Chairman got asked this when
16 he took the Chairmanship in January.

17 And so, you're supposed to have this crystal ball that
18 you know exactly what's going to be important over a certain period of
19 time.

20 We have a certain role and function under law that we
21 carry out as individual Commissioners and then contributing to the
22 advancement of the Commission's deliberative process.

23 And so, you might think we have a lot of control over
24 what's a priority when. Frankly, we sit with Annette Vietti-Cook month
25 to month and she kind of says, you know, you're going to have to find
26 time to schedule this then and that mandatory hearing.

1 And so, our job is really to fit all of the, you know, the
2 big rocks in the bowl and then the little rocks around that and then pour
3 in the sand of the things that go in around that.

4 So, I think, again, that requires us to come together
5 and work on it. And sometimes we're more busy and sometimes we're
6 less busy and we don't have a lot of control over when a large
7 rulemaking package might be finished and brought to us. We get a lot
8 of notice about it, but we might get a bunch of them in a short period of
9 months. So, it's very uneven in terms of when we're busier and when
10 we're less busy.

11 I do note that there are natural times in the year, the
12 end of the year and August when I think because the staff's pace slows
13 down a little bit, then we get a little bit of relief as well as
14 Commissioners.

15 But we kind of -- we are in a response mode, much as
16 all the NRC staff. You often don't get to pick the issue that lands on
17 your desk on a Monday morning. Oddly enough, it's the same for us.

18 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Well, I'm going to
19 answer this maybe in just a little bit different way. I don't disagree with
20 a single thing that Chairman Burns or Commissioner Svinicki cited.

21 Another way somebody could ask the question is
22 where are you spending most of your time? And so I'm going to share
23 just two votes because we all spend a lot of time making sure that we're
24 making well informed decisions and trying to do the best we can to fulfill
25 our responsibilities as voting Commissioners on various adjudication
26 policy matters, et cetera.

1 So, I spend a lot of time recently on greater than Class
2 C waste. I had six meetings with the NRC -- six different meetings with
3 NRC staff. I voted on that on Friday, my vote will come out publically
4 later on at some point.

5 And I started delving into IEEE-603-2009. So, I'm
6 looking at Glenn and Bill down there for digital I&C standards, very
7 complex issues, lots of different views on how that might go forward.

8 So, that just gives you a snapshot of how one
9 Commissioner is spending some time.

10 COMMISSIONER BARAN: The additional time
11 afforded me by three people going ahead of me has failed me in this
12 instance. I don't think I can come up with a really good list of five
13 things.

14 Because I was sitting here thinking through all the
15 things that I would put as really high priorities and I wasn't able to do my
16 own rebaselining process in the last like 60 seconds.

17 But a lot of things have been discussed and a lot of
18 things we haven't discussed today but are just super important that the
19 agency as a whole is doing right now.

20 And, as Commissioner Ostendorff just mentioned and
21 Commissioner Svinicki, too, you know, the most pressing things for us
22 as an agency right now aren't always the things that are right in front of
23 us at any given moment.

24 But Project Aim, Fukushima Lessons Learned, we
25 have final inspections and analysis on Watts Bar II. We have
26 construction oversight at the AP-1000 sites.

1 We're trying to think through and be forward leaning on
2 having a process and figuring out the policy issues related to small
3 modular reactors that's really important.

4 We have ANO. We have Pilgrim. We have a lot
5 going on. We have important rulemakings and that's well beyond the
6 list of five.

7 So, there's a lot going on at the agency that you all
8 know because you're working on it. I don't think I could pick like just
9 five things, but it's our job to make sure we're aware of all this, do all the
10 reading that you give to us, and we do, and be as thoughtful as we can
11 about all these different issues.

12 Fortunately, we don't have sit around and rank them
13 because that would really take a lot of time. But thank you for the
14 question.

15 READER: How did the Commissioners hold managers
16 accountable for establishing and maintaining an open and collaborative
17 work environment?

18 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, that primarily that's through
19 the supervisory process above supervisors and managers are held
20 accountable by their superiors and that's part of not only the formal
21 appraisal process, but the ongoing coaching and leadership process
22 that we have.

23 Again, I'll draw on my past experience, you know,
24 within the staff as a manager with the staff and that's how -- what the
25 expectations that we would make and have for our supervisors or our
26 managers in terms of assuring that those aspects, the collaborative

1 open work environment, that the ability to vigorously debate and raise
2 viewpoints on the matters that come before the agency and that may
3 become the Commission, that that process is honored.

4 So, that's where I think the primary accountability and
5 the primary oversight for that comes.

6 READER: Will there be opportunities for staff to
7 continue to advance in this era of downsizing and shrinkage?
8 Otherwise, why would our most talented staff want to stay if it will take
9 longer for them to advance and obtain promotional opportunities?

10 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, I think there are a lot of
11 opportunities within the agency and continue to be so. As I noted
12 before, we have gone through cycles of change in a number of times
13 across, I know, the career that I had here.

14 And we've come out on all of them in terms of a
15 well-qualified and enthusiastic work force. I realize on a day-to-day
16 basis, there are some days, believe it, for me, too, that some days are
17 better than others.

18 But, ultimately, I think we recognize the need for a
19 highly qualified staff. We recognize the need to have opportunities for
20 advancement or opportunities for growth. And I think on the by and
21 large, we do a good job of providing them.

22 And I think with that, that's probably the last question.
23 I'm going to invite forward -- Sheryl, are you going to come? We're
24 going to invite forward Sheryl Burrows who's the president of the local
25 chapter of the NTEU for comments.

26 PARTICIPANT: Good afternoon, everyone.

1 I'm Sheryl Burrows, President of Chapter 208 of the
2 National Treasury Employees' Union, or NTEU. NTEU is the exclusive
3 representative of bargaining unit employees here at the NRC.

4 I am joined today by various members of the
5 dedicated, hardworking NTEU team. This includes our Executive
6 Board, stewards, labor partners and members of various working
7 groups and committees.

8 I would like to thank all of these employees who work
9 so hard every day to support the NTEU mission of dignity and respect
10 for all federal employees. Their efforts truly make the NRC a better
11 place.

12 A lot has happened since our last Agency All Staff
13 meeting with the Commission. Over the spring and summer, NTEU
14 engaged in interest-based bargaining which resulted in a revised
15 Collective Bargaining Agreement, or CBA.

16 We're in the process of getting the new CBA printed
17 and made available on various websites. However, we sent a link of
18 the revised articles to the Bargaining Unit in a union announcement, so
19 you do not have to wait for the entire CBA publication to take advantage
20 of the new contract which is currently in effect.

21 Some of our gains included keeping benefits that we
22 currently enjoy. Management originally proposed to reduce or
23 eliminate some of these such as our one hour gliding.

24 New gains were also achieved that include a
25 percentage link between non-Bargaining Unit supervisory performance
26 awards and Bargaining Unit performance awards and specified time

1 limits for supervisors to approve leave requests.

2 New gains also include your ability to earn regular and
3 credit hours on Saturdays.

4 Also, we have a dignity clause in Article II which
5 memorializes NTEU and the agency's commitment to NRC values
6 focusing on the importance of conducting relationships in the workplace
7 in a civil business-like manner.

8 NTEU and the agency also agreed on language and
9 formalized that language in a Memorandum of Understanding that
10 implements phased retirement which is now available to NRC
11 employees. I'm proud to say that the NRC is the first agency to offer
12 this benefit to their employees.

13 Even with the gains that we made this year, there is no
14 question that these are tough times for federal employees. There are
15 external factors at play that the NRC may try to manage but will not be
16 able to control.

17 These include congressional scrutiny from many
18 representatives which quite often seems to turn our very important
19 safety mission into a budget line as well as a decline in the interest in
20 new reactor licensing and construction.

21 These changes have created the current environment
22 and they are profound. In response, the agency has proactively
23 initiated Project Aim 2020.

24 As important is the agency's expressed willingness to
25 partner with the Union as this initiative is developed and implemented.

26 This is the right thing to do for Bargaining Unit

1 employees. Nonetheless, NTEU celebrates this opportunity to engage
2 in partnership.

3 To clarify the important role that partnership plays, I'd
4 like to point out that NTEU does not have the authority to challenge
5 management decisions. However, NTEU does have the right to
6 challenge the impact and implementation of such decisions.

7 Let me repeat that. NTEU has the right to challenge
8 the impact and implementation of such decisions.

9 Partnering this effort in effect is the way to resolve
10 questions and concerns before they become challenges.

11 The bottom line of Project Aim is to have the right
12 number of employees, in the right positions, with the right skills, doing
13 the right work. The question is, do you see yourself in the bottom line?

14 You should and NTEU, as your representative, will
15 work to ensure that you do. Through partnership, NTEU will strive to
16 ensure that we are involved in the important impact and implementation
17 of Project Aim initiatives before final decisions are made about the way
18 that you do your work and before processes are streamlined or shed.

19 Through the partnership process, NTEU will
20 continually reiterate that Project Aim must focus on ensuring that three
21 fundamental components are in the forefront of every decision.

22 First, that you understand your role within your specific
23 organization and how that contributes to the agency's mission as well
24 as the specific responsibilities that your work entails.

25 Second, you have clear processes and procedures in
26 place to help you accomplish your work effectively and efficiently.

1 And, third, that you have the necessary training not
2 only to accomplish the work you do today, but also training that
3 provides you with the opportunity to grow.

4 I implore all Bargaining Unit employees to take Project
5 Aim very seriously. Project Aim will affect everything that the NRC
6 does including what the NRC does and how that work will be assigned.

7 There are a couple of comments that NTEU has heard
8 from our Bargaining Unit employees with some regularity.

9 The first is that some supervisors are sending mixed
10 messages about Project Aim. If the agency is going to change, the key
11 players will be your supervisors. Their job is dynamic. NTEU urges
12 the agency's leaders to ensure that middle and low level managers
13 have the resources that they will need to do this effectively.

14 The second comment is that Project Aim is going
15 forward at such a fast pace. There's an old adage that I'm sure
16 resonates with many of us that quality never comes with speed.
17 However, waiting until external events outpace the agency may well
18 result in a lot of damage to our organization. Please be alert, be aware
19 and be engaged.

20 Now, more than ever, NTEU reminds you that it's your
21 duty to speak up and speak out. Now, more than ever, NTEU needs
22 your input, your feedback and support as the agency navigates through
23 these difficult times ahead.

24 I want to remind you that if you have questions or
25 concerns that you can come to the Union office in One White Flint
26 North, 1-G-22 across from Dawn's NUREG Café or send us an email at

1 nteu@nrc.gov.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks, Sheryl. And, again, I
4 appreciate the work the Union's doing in partnership with management
5 and particularly in this area of Project Aim as you noted.

6 Well, that's it for this year's All Employees Meeting. I
7 know we'll run into each other in the elevators, in the hallways and all,
8 but again, I want to extend my appreciation for the hard work of this
9 agency and particularly its employees do in carrying out our mission.

10 And, with that, we are adjourned and I wish you all well.

11 Thank you.

12 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter was concluded
13 at 3:31 p.m.)

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