

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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BRIEFING ON EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND CIVIL
RIGHTS OUTREACH

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THURSDAY

DECEMBER 3, 2015

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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

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The briefing convened at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, One White Flint North, Commissioners' Conference Room, 11555 Rockville Pike, at 9:30 a.m., Stephen Burns, Chairman, presiding.

NRC COMMISSIONERS:

STEPHEN G. BURNS, Chairman

KRISTINE L. SVINICKI, Commissioner

WILLIAM C. OSTENDORFF, Commissioner

JEFF BARAN, Commissioner

NRC STAFF:

MARGARET M. DOANE, General Counsel

ANNETTE L. VIETTI-COOK, Secretary of the Commission

VICTOR MCCREE, Executive Director for Operations

VONNA ORDAZ, Director, Office of Small Business and Civil
Rights

JOEL KRAVETZ, Civil Rights Program Manager

TUWANDA SMITH, Outreach and Compliance Coordination
Program Manager

MICHAEL CASE, Director, Division of Systems Analysis,
Office
of Nuclear Regulatory Research

KRISS KENNEDY, Deputy Regional Administrator, Region IV

THERESA CLARK, Co-Chair, Native American Advisory
Committee

1 PROCEEDINGS

2 9:31 a.m.

3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Good morning, everyone. Let me
4 find my notes here to open our meeting. I want to welcome our panel
5 that we'll hear from this morning, other staff, and members of the public
6 may be in the room or listening in.

7 We're meeting today as the Commission to receive a
8 semi-annual update on the progress and opportunities related to Civil
9 Rights Outreach and Equal Opportunity Compliance. As we all know,
10 recruitment and retention of highly competent and skilled workforce is
11 essential for the agency to excel in carrying out its mission.

12 Our permanent workforce declined approximately 1
13 percent in Fiscal 2015, and we do expect a smaller workforce over the
14 next few years as we implement Project Aim 2020 recommendations.
15 And as the agency looks toward the future it'll be important to assure
16 that we have a balanced and high-performing workforce at all levels.
17 So, we look forward this morning to hearing from the staff about the
18 agency's Diversity Management and Inclusion Programs, and efforts to
19 promote Equal Opportunity across the agency.

20 Would any of my colleagues like to say any opening
21 remarks? If not, I'll turn it over to the EDO, Vic McCree.

22 MR. McCREE: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and
23 Commissioners.

24 The purpose of the briefing today is to provide a status
25 report and highlight accomplishments of the agency through the Office
26 of Small Business and Civil Rights, SBCR. The specific programs that

1 we'll be presenting today are the Equal Employment Opportunity
2 Program, also known as the Civil Rights Program, and the Outreach
3 and Compliance Coordination Program. Additionally, Office Director
4 Vonna Ordaz will brief you on Affirmative Employment and Small
5 Business Programs.

6 This is my first Equal Employment Opportunity Small
7 Business and Civil Rights Commission briefing as EDO, and I believe
8 it's fitting that this particular briefing occur relatively early in my tenure
9 given the importance of these programs to the overall effectiveness and
10 efficiency of the agency.

11 As I stated a number of times over the past two
12 months, the agency's priorities include fulfilling our safety and security
13 mission, taking care of our people, demonstrating our values, and
14 communicating effectively. This particular briefing highlights our focus
15 on the priorities of people and values, and can be viewed as somewhat
16 of a barometer of the overall health of the agency.

17 SBCR programs also provide the impetus for our
18 efforts to carry out the agency's obligations under various Civil Rights
19 and Small Business statutes. Quite frankly, they've done a
20 commendable job of meeting these requirements, as well as
21 developing and sharing opportunities to recruit, develop, and retain a
22 diverse workforce.

23 This year, SBCR has chosen what I believe is a very
24 timely and appropriate theme entitled, "Engaged in Change." I'm
25 extremely proud of the accomplishments and the dedication of the
26 people in SBCR. Their efforts contribute directly to accomplishing the

1 agency's mission, as I indicated, improving our culture, and embracing
2 the agency's values. That being said, it's also worth noting that there's
3 still more work to do.

4 I'll now turn the presentation over to Vonna Ordaz,
5 Director, Office of Small Business and Civil Rights who will introduce
6 our program participants and begin the briefing. Vonna.

7 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you, Vic. Good morning,
8 Chairman Burns and Commissioners.

9 We're happy to provide a briefing today about the
10 NRC's continuing efforts to make important progress in the areas of
11 Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity Management and Small
12 Business programs.

13 Over the past year, SBCR has continued its dedication
14 to our mission and there have been many new and innovative changes
15 regarding agency policies, programs, and initiatives to support positive
16 changes in our culture at the NRC. With this in mind, the theme that
17 has resonated with SBCR and our colleagues is Engaged in Change.

18 This morning we will share some significant strides and
19 how the NRC has engaged in progressive changes over this past year.
20 Joel Kravetz from SBCR, Civil Rights Program Manager, will provide an
21 update regarding the changes in the status of Equal Employment
22 Opportunity, statistical trends of cases, and training. Tuwanda Smith,
23 SBCR's Outreach and Compliance Coordination Program Manager, will
24 talk about positive changes that have resulted in stronger partnerships,
25 increased compliance with regulations, and NRC-wide support to
26 minority-serving institution programs. Mike Case from the Office of

1 Research, and Kriss Kennedy from Region IV will share some
2 wonderful diversity and inclusion initiatives, and best practices that
3 reinforce positive changes across the agency. And Theresa Clark,
4 Co-Chair of the Native American Advisory Committee, will provide a
5 joint Advisory Committee Statement that offers their perspectives of
6 diversity and inclusion at the NRC.

7 Their comments will reflect that there is truly a strong
8 nexus between embracing diversity and unlocking the potential of all of
9 our employees. But first, let me take a minute to share with you some
10 recent exciting changes for the NRC in the areas of Affirmative
11 Employment, and Diversity, and Small Business Initiatives.

12 SBCR is the process of deploying the Diversity
13 Dialogue Project known as DDP. The term Dialogue stands for
14 Diversity Inclusion Awareness, Leading Organizational Growth,
15 Understanding, and Engagement. The DDP is modeled after a project
16 created by NASA, and it's all about change; change to strengthen
17 organizational effectiveness of the NRC through diversity and inclusion
18 awareness.

19 The project will help develop a greater appreciation for
20 the value and positive impacts made by diverse groups in meeting the
21 mission of the agency. Participants can address diversity inclusion
22 topics in a safe environment that develops relationships through
23 interaction. It's hopeful that the agency will use feedback from the pilot
24 DDP sessions to help guide future diversity and inclusion initiatives and
25 further increase the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Engagement
26 Score. The Diversity Management and Inclusion Council, known as

1 DMIC, is sponsoring this effort. And DMIC is co-chaired by both SBCR
2 and OCHCO.

3 We're anxious to begin the first cohort in early calendar
4 year 2016. We anticipate the duration of this first cohort to be
5 approximately six months; and, moreover, it's hopeful that DDP
6 participants will serve as Diversity Ambassadors promoting the NRC's
7 Diversity Management and Inclusion Program. Slide 5.

8 In the area of workforce diversity, the agency made
9 some recent strides to enhance diversity at senior levels and to fulfill the
10 EDO's expectations of a more diverse workforce. However, we note
11 that the recent Senior Executive Candidate Development Program,
12 known as SES CDP, Class of 2017 included only four women among
13 selectees which is approximately 15 percent. Two of the women came
14 from technical offices, and two from corporate offices, and none of the
15 women were minorities. The previous SES CDP class was 40 percent
16 female. We acknowledge that there is room for improvement in this
17 area. The Executive Resource Board had an initial briefing of this
18 declining trend and the follow-up briefing is scheduled in January to
19 collectively discuss a path forward.

20 Also, we note that the Nuclear Safety Professional
21 Development Program, known as NSPDP, is an important feeder
22 program that has had a positive impact on the overall hiring of
23 entry-level women and minorities in the past. However, this year only
24 five of the 23 NSPDP hires or 22 percent were female, and 22 percent
25 were identified as minorities. In comparison, four years ago the
26 NSPDP class was 40 percent female and 50 percent minority.

1 This will remain a challenge as we reduce the size of
2 the agency and limit recruitment. However, both OCHCO and SBCR
3 have highly encouraged selecting officials to consider the grant
4 recipients from minority-serving institutions for their entry-level
5 positions and broaden their selections beyond the typical schools that
6 we recruit from. These individuals have received NRC grant money,
7 they are highly qualified, and they can be non-competitively selected.
8 All of these avenues are available and possible with collaboration and
9 open minds of all of those involved in the process.

10 In the area of engagement, we recognize that we can
11 do better with a renewed focus and commitment of agency senior
12 leaders and managers in making more progress to enhance diversity
13 and inclusion across the agency and at all levels.

14 Within the past year or so, we created a Veterans
15 Employee Resource Group, known as VERG, to support the diversity
16 and inclusion of veterans. We also created a Diversity Inclusion
17 Management Council to support diversity in the workplace, an Advisory
18 Committee for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender employees
19 and their allies, and also the Executive Sponsor Program to engage
20 senior executives with our current EEO Committees, as well as many
21 more initiatives.

22 As a path forward to help foster a more diverse and
23 inclusive culture at the NRC, we are focusing on developing behaviors
24 that reflect the five inclusive habits; Fairness, Openness,
25 Cooperativeness, Supportiveness, and Empowerment, otherwise
26 known as FOCSE. This is called the New IQ which was developed by

1 the Office of Personnel Management and the Department of Veteran
2 Affairs.

3 The New IQ is calculated based on certain responses
4 to certain questions in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.
5 SBCR has spent considerable time meeting with various office directors
6 and regional administrators to enhance their knowledge of the New IQ,
7 and to support them with any strategies to enable stronger inclusion in
8 our organizations. NRC will be using this innovative way to help
9 improve teamwork and productivity in the near term.

10 Additionally, because of the agency's commitment to
11 diversity and inclusion, our path forward also includes taking a look at
12 the employee life cycle in the areas of recruitment, development, and
13 retention to identify ways of enhancing employee engagement.

14 We have recently contracted with the IVY Planning
15 Group, a prominent local diversity and inclusion firm, which is a
16 women-owned small business and they are represented here today.
17 IVY Planning has already reached out to many executives, OCHCO,
18 and others to gather important data and will complete their interviews
19 shortly, and produce recommendations for our agency.

20 Now turning to Small Business. The NRC continues
21 to maximize the opportunity of change regarding small business firms
22 located in historically under-utilized business zones, known as Hub
23 Zones, to support the NRC through prime contracts. A local
24 construction support firm was recently selected for an award of \$3.5
25 million. The NRC continues to support several small business events
26 to help build and enrich the portfolio of firms to be considered for future

1 contract opportunities.

2 And another area of change is in the area of agency
3 contracts awarded to service-disabled veterans. During FY 15, the
4 NRC was very proactive in attending several service-disabled
5 veteran-owned conferences to assist in helping such veterans succeed
6 in business. The NRC awarded \$9.3 million to service-disabled
7 veteran-owned small businesses, and hopes to continue this positive
8 trend.

9 As a result of the Small Business Programs
10 collaborative efforts as of FY 14, the agency has maintained an SBA
11 Scorecard Letter Grade of A for four consecutive years. While the SBA
12 Scorecard has not been released yet for FY 15, the agency met five out
13 of five Small Business goals, so we are anticipating positive news when
14 the grades officially get released in the spring. Next slide, please.

15 In closing, the NRC has been recognized throughout
16 the Federal government as a model agency for supporting diversity and
17 inclusion in the workplace, and as one of the top performing agencies of
18 the Annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey in the area of
19 engagement. This year we are proud to acknowledge that there were
20 three employees who were granted NRC Honorary Meritorious Service
21 Awards for EEO Excellence; William Burton from NRR, Carolyn Faria
22 from OE, and Dr. Natasha Greene from Region IV. Also, Vanice Perin
23 from NRO was granted the SBCR Director Award for her unwavering
24 dedication and outstanding commitment to EEO and diversity programs
25 at the NRC. Would the four of you please stand to be recognized?

26 (Applause)

1 MS. ORDAZ: As we share our messages with you
2 today, and as I brief you for the last time as the Director of SBCR, I can
3 say that I have truly enjoyed my experience learning more about EEO,
4 minority-serving institutions, grants, diversity and inclusion, and Small
5 Business. More importantly, I've enjoyed working across the agency
6 and building relationships with all of my colleagues in these areas. I can
7 guarantee you that the dedication of the NRC people that I've
8 experienced over the past four years in this role make the agency a
9 better place. And before I close, I'd like to ask all of the members of
10 the agency's eight EEO Advisory Committee Members, two Affinity
11 Groups, BIG and Globe, one employee resource group, VERG, the
12 EEO counselors, the University champions, headquarters and regional
13 DMACs, the DMIC members and our executive sponsors for the EEO
14 Committees, as well as the SBCR staff to please stand to be
15 recognized.

16 (Applause)

17 MS. ORDAZ: I want to take a moment to thank each of
18 you for your true dedication and hard work to the mission of the SBCR
19 and agency mission. Each of you have competing demands of your
20 primary duties and responsibilities, yet you unwillingly, or willingly,
21 excuse me, incorporate your collateral --

22 (Laughter)

23 MS. ORDAZ: A faux pas, willingly incorporate your
24 collateral duties into your work day. Let's applaud their tireless efforts.

25 (Applause)

26 MS. ORDAZ: I want to commend everyone who stood

1 for being Engaged in Change and for making a difference every day at
2 the NRC. Without you, we could not function. And now I'll turn it over
3 to Joel Kravetz. Thank you.

4 MR. KRAVETZ: Thank you, Vonna. Good morning,
5 Chairman and Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to brief
6 you this morning on Equal Employment Opportunity or EEO complaint
7 trends, as well as actions and activities related to EEO during Fiscal
8 Year or FY 2015. Next slide.

9 In FY 2015, there was a slight increase in the number
10 of both formal and informal complaints filed at NRC. Specifically, in FY
11 2015 there were 28 informal complaints, as compared to Fiscal Year
12 2014 when there were 26 informal complaints. In FY 2015, there were
13 22 formal complaints, as compared to 17 formal complaints filed during
14 Fiscal Year 2014.

15 NRC is engaged in change, and as such it is neither
16 unhealthy, nor unexpected to see a slight increase in complaint activity
17 during times of change. In fact, it's a good indication that people are
18 aware of, and are willing to use these processes.

19 Moreover, while the trend line shows an overall
20 increase, the increase is not dramatic, and recent complaint activity is
21 modest as a percent of NRC's total workforce. Specifically, in FY
22 2015, roughly one half of one percent of NRC employees filed
23 complaints of discrimination, and that compares quite favorably when
24 analyzing EEO complaint trend statistics across the Federal
25 government. Next slide.

26 As this slide demonstrates, the most frequent bases of

1 alleged discrimination are age, sex, race, with reprisal following closely
2 behind. And together, those bases comprise over four-fifths of the
3 bases alleged in FY 2015. And this breakdown is very similar to the
4 breakdown in Fiscal Year 2014 where the same four alleged bases
5 were alleged in similar percentages last fiscal year. There was a small
6 increase in reprisal complaints as reflected in the percentage of cases
7 increasing from roughly 12 to 18 percent between FY 14 and FY 2015.
8 Next slide.

9 The most frequent issues of alleged discrimination in
10 FY 2015 were complaints alleging harassment or hostile work
11 environment. And there were about one-fifth of all complaint activity in
12 FY 2015 related to complaints alleging harassment or hostile work
13 environment. And this is in line with the Federal government as a whole.

14 The other most common issues raised in Fiscal Year
15 2015 were claims alleging either non-selection or non-promotion, or
16 claims alleging evaluations or appraisals. And, again, like 2014, those
17 were the most common issues raised over the last two fiscal years and,
18 indeed, very similar to what we see when examining EEO trends within
19 the Federal government as a whole.

20 Because there was also an increase from about 9 to 18
21 percent in claims alleging non-promotion between Fiscal Year 2014
22 and Fiscal Year 2015; again, as I mentioned during a prior slide, with
23 only a small percentage of NRC's workforce filing complaints, even a
24 modest increase in the number of individuals filing complaints will
25 impact the percentages.

26 I will next highlight some of the accomplishments in

1 areas of change for SBCR. Next slide, please.

2 The Civil Rights and Diversity Directorate conducted its
3 second ever joint EEO Counselor and Advisory Committee Conference
4 this September. Attendees included representatives of the Diversity
5 Management and Inclusion Council, the Executive Sponsor Program,
6 the Diversity Management Advisory Committee, all eight EEO
7 Committees, the Veterans Employment Resource Group members,
8 representatives of BIG and Globe and, of course, our collateral duty
9 EEO counselors both here at headquarters and in all four regions.

10 The theme of the conference was Diversity and EEO,
11 Engaged in Change. And it included informative topics and dynamic
12 speakers like Rachel See, an attorney from the National Labor
13 Relations Board who, while a Federal employee, transitioned from male
14 to female. Her personal story of change was riveting, eye-opening,
15 and educational. Next slide.

16 The two-day conference was very well attended with
17 over 100 participants, and very well received by those who participated.
18 And I want to thank all the collateral duty EEO counselors, both past
19 and present, who help the EEO program succeed here at NRC. They
20 provide NRC employees with access to the EEO program. Next slide.

21 I will next highlight three important areas and focus on
22 their impact at NRC. First, like the NRC, the Equal Employment
23 Opportunity Commission or EEOC also issues Management Directives
24 to provide guidance to their regulations. Most recently, after 16 years,
25 the EEOC revised its Management Directive 110 which provides
26 guidance on the Federal sector EEO process. We're currently in the

1 process of examining the new Management Directive 110 issued by
2 EEOC to see what impact, if any, it has on SBCR's EEO program.

3 Second, you may recall that Melody Fopma, the
4 Associate Director of the Civil Rights and Diversity Directorate informed
5 the Commission in June of 2015 at a similar briefing that a finding of
6 age discrimination, only the third in the history of NRC, was made by a
7 District Court Judge early in 2015. By way of an update, I wanted to
8 inform you that OCHCO, OGC, and SBCR have had an opportunity to
9 analyze and reflect on that District Court decision, and are working
10 closely to develop training for managers and supervisors on Lessons
11 Learned. This training will be implemented in 2016.

12 Last, in the summer of 2015, the EEOC issued a very
13 important decision referred to as the Baldwin case. In the Baldwin
14 case, the EEOC concluded that all claims alleging sexual orientation
15 are inherently claims alleging sex discrimination in violation of the Civil
16 Rights Act of 1964.

17 Now, the EEOC recognized in Baldwin that there is still
18 an Executive Order that requires agencies like NRC to have in place a
19 policy and procedure for processing claims of sexual orientation.
20 However, the EEOC said as a best practice that all claims alleging
21 sexual orientation should be processed in the Federal sector EEO
22 process as claims alleging sex discrimination of violation of the Civil
23 Rights Act of 1964. We have trained our Civil Rights staff and our
24 Collateral Duty EEO Counselors to recognize when such claims come
25 forward in order to properly process them.

26 I would like to thank you all for your time and attention

1 to this important area as we continue to engage in change as an
2 agency. I will now turn it over to my SBCR colleague, Tuwanda Smith.

3 MS. SMITH: Thank you. Chairman, Commissioners,
4 EDO, thank you for the opportunity to present on the Outreach and
5 Compliance Coordination Program. Next slide.

6 The OCCP consists of two major areas, Equal
7 Opportunity Compliance Programs to promote non-discrimination and
8 fair practices, and NRC conducted and assisted programs. And the
9 Minority-Serving Institutions Program which provides support and
10 assistance to institutions of higher education, including Hispanic, Black,
11 Asian American, Pacific Islanders, American Indian, and Alaska
12 Native-serving institutions. Next slide.

13 What I'd like to do today is to provide insight regarding
14 engaging change through partnerships focused on program alignment,
15 and performance. I would also like to acknowledge our partners who
16 have helped us be very successful this year; the Departments of Justice
17 and Education, Health and Human Services, Environmental Protection
18 agency, White House offices, institutions of higher education, public
19 and private organizations, other Federal agencies, stakeholders, and
20 NRC offices, groups, committees, and employees.

21 Next slide.

22 Engaging our partners have helped us to develop our
23 infrastructure, increase our capacity, and to produce our goals and
24 performance results. Next slide.

25 When we look at developing infrastructure and
26 capacity in the compliance area, our Federal partners, NRC offices

1 such as OGC, IG, as well as our Director of Resources weighed in on
2 our newly developed MDs Handbook, and our External Complaint
3 Processing Investigation Procedures Manual, our Compliance Review
4 Guide, and our Mediation Process to insure that we have uniform
5 coordination across the Federal government, internal guidance, as well
6 as knowledge management succession, and openness and
7 transparency in NRC's procedural processes. Next slide.

8 Likewise, OCCP was able to assist the Department of
9 Justice -- next slide. Please. Was able to assist the Department of
10 Justice with amendments to its Title VI regulations that govern
11 discrimination in our federally-assisted programs based on race, color,
12 and national origin. We also were able to collaborate with our
13 Acquisition Management Office and our Small Business Program to
14 make sure that we make contract awards in the areas of limited English
15 proficiency, investigation, mediation services, and along with OCIO
16 were able to issue a contract for Section 508 compliance assessment
17 for NRC's website, as well as consultant services for our published
18 documents. Next slide.

19 In looking at how we achieved our performance
20 results, with the assistance and coordination of OGC, OI, affected
21 offices, and stakeholders we were able to do complaint processing of
22 one formal complaint alleging sex discrimination, conduct a mediation,
23 as well as an investigation that's currently underway. With assistance
24 of AMD and our Grant offices we conducted 65 pre-award compliance
25 reviews to insure and identify any concerns of discrimination before
26 AMD makes our agency grant award. And we've conducted

1 post-award monitoring of those grantees. Next slide.

2 We facilitated LEP translation services for OI to help
3 with public meetings and witness interviews, and transcription services
4 for OCFO in carrying out their time management project. We
5 participated and cosponsored the 2015 National Environmental Justice
6 Conference, and we collaborated with NMSS as well as other offices.
7 NMSS conducted a workshop at that conference. Next slide.

8 In the area of minority-serving institutions program, our
9 biggest infrastructure accomplishment was the development of a MSI
10 Information and Data Collection System which was briefly mentioned a
11 year ago to the Commission. We put it in execution this year and were
12 able to produce five MSI reports, and five MSI plans. This particular
13 system has reduced staff hours in collecting information across the
14 offices. With the help of OCHCO, our University champions, offices,
15 our committees, and our groups we've been able to promote
16 non-competitive employment of our grant program students which can
17 be looked at as a return on investment for the agency. Next slide.

18 We supported, along with other NRC offices, the 2015
19 Symposium for Gallaudet Undergraduates. We also co-hosted a visit
20 from the University of Texas-San Antonio, which was supported by the
21 EDO office, OCHCO, Research, and our Hispanic Employment
22 Program Advisory Committee. We also co-hosted a pre-college
23 symposium for Fort Valley State University STEM Academy students,
24 and that was also supported by the EDO's office, NMSS, NSIR, NRO,
25 Region II, ASLBP, a number of other offices, COI. I just did that wrong,
26 you changed you thing, OIS, OIC, whatever, you got it. Okay. And

1 Blacks in Government. Next slide.

2 We served on the Training Committee, and
3 participated in White House 2015 HBCU conference, and in
4 collaboration with NMSS, we participated in the National Congress of
5 American Indians Conference. This was NRC's first time on the
6 agenda. The conference featured the agency's Tribal Liaison
7 Program, Tribal Colleges and Universities Program, and our Small
8 Business Program. The Small Business Program, with collaboration
9 with AMD, was able to contract for over \$27 million to American Indian
10 and Alaska Native-owned businesses.

11 For eight consecutive years, NRC has received the
12 Top Supporter Award for its assistance to HBCU-accredited
13 engineering programs. This has been done through collaboration and
14 coordination of efforts with OCHCO, our University champions, our
15 Affinity Groups, committees, and volunteer employees. As you can
16 see, our partners have been very instrumental in helping us develop our
17 infrastructure, increasing our capability and ability to provide services,
18 and performance results.

19 Again, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity allowing
20 me to present today, and I'd like to turn the brief over to Mike Case.

21 MR. CASE: Good morning. Thanks for the
22 opportunity to speak with you today.

23 I want to talk to you today about our efforts to focus on
24 people in the Office of Research. By our people focus, I mean how we
25 engage our people and leverage their diversity and inclusiveness to
26 more effectively accomplish the mission. Next slide.

1 The people's strengths of the Office of Research have
2 changed over time. Maybe 10 years ago, the office had talented
3 technical people, but the Center of Technical Expertise resided more
4 with the contractors and the National Labs. Today, we strike a better
5 balance between our staff and the Labs. Coincident with the advent of
6 New Reactor Licensing, we've been focusing on improving the
7 technical skills of our staff. Now through projects such as the
8 State-of-the-Art Consequence Analysis or SOARCA, and the Level 3
9 PRA, the Research staff now provides the technical impetus for key
10 projects and the Labs are in support. Research now has a wide range of
11 engineering, scientific, and support staff skills. Our management team
12 is talented and diverse, as well. Next slide.

13 The Office of Research has built and maintained the
14 investment in the diverse technical skills of our staff through an active
15 participation in a range of agency Human Resource programs. In
16 addition to our participation in agency recruiting programs, such as the
17 ones shown on the slide, we are heavily involved in programs that build
18 the technical skills for the staff. These includes the Graduate
19 Fellowship Program where we've sponsored eight individuals over the
20 past two years; the Intergovernmental Personnel Act Assignee
21 Program where we are sponsoring three individuals from Sandia
22 National Lab this year, and the Foreign Assignee Program where we're
23 currently sponsoring three assignees from three diverse countries.
24 We hope to continue to take advantage of these opportunities in the
25 future to accomplish the mission and enhance our diversity and
26 inclusion. Next slide.

1 Our people's strengths are enhanced through the
2 office's initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in support of the
3 mission. First and foremost in this effort is emphasizing with the staff,
4 Research's role and unique contributions to the NRC Safety and
5 Security mission. Besides providing direct technical support to the
6 regulatory and regional offices, we provide a longer term perspective to
7 many of the agency's safety issues, as well as state-of-the-art tools for
8 use in regulatory applications. We fully integrate international
9 experience into our products reflecting the global diversity of technical
10 expertise. Through our user-need process, and our international
11 cooperation activities the office insures that individual staff members
12 can articulate the line of sight connection between his or her activity and
13 the safety or regulatory outcome. Next slide.

14 The Office of Research uses a variety of
15 communication tools to promote staff inclusion in all the research
16 activities. Some are periodic like the researcher, and some are just in
17 time communication vehicles used to keep the staff informed during
18 periods of change. For example, the Moving up the Pike Newsletter
19 was used to keep the staff informed of issues when we were moving
20 back into the White Flint complex from Church Street. Next slide.

21 Research uses inclusive activities to break down
22 barriers to improve staff collaboration skills. When we first arrived at
23 Church Street, a group of staff volunteers created the CHILL
24 Committee which stood for Church Street Information Living and
25 Learning. This committee led many of our events, such as holiday
26 parties and diversity day celebrations aimed at enhancing team work

1 and insuring that the Research staff felt connected to the rest of the
2 headquarters staff at the White Flint campus. We are continuing
3 CHILL back at White Flint under a new name called Research
4 Embrace. Next slide.

5 Inclusion is a precursor to increased participation and
6 involvement in agency's programs, processes, and activities. A good
7 example of participation in agency programs is Research involvement
8 in diversity activities. Our employees proudly serve on a number of
9 Equal Opportunity Advisory Committees. About 11 staff members
10 from Research serve in a leadership capacity as chairs, co-chairs, or
11 committee members. Next slide.

12 The climate of inclusion and diversity leads to some
13 higher levels of effectiveness where employees not only participate in
14 agency processes, but are willing to work to optimize agency
15 processes. During the move back from Church Street, and with the
16 support of Admin, OCHCO, CIO, and NTEU, nine employees
17 volunteered to participate in a six-month shared space pilot. In this pilot
18 they would telework for at least three days and share an 80 square foot
19 workspace with another employee. This pilot could result in a program
20 that optimizes agency space and reduces our footprint. We will
21 continue to look for these types of opportunities to optimize processes,
22 especially in the context of Project Aim. Next slide.

23 Keeping the focus on people by choosing the right
24 people and investing in their development, and leveraging diversity and
25 inclusion activities to enhance contributions to the mission leads to
26 positive results. Above are the Research Federal Employee Viewpoint

1 Survey results and they are pretty positive. For the New IQ indicator
2 where we received some great support from SBCR, and the six major
3 feds indices, the Office of Research scored above both the Federal
4 government average and the NRC average. Next slide.

5 Finally, an enhanced people focus in Research gives
6 us a capacity to manage change. This slide depicts several recent
7 accomplishments. We have already successfully managed change in
8 situations such as the Church Street move, as well as reducing and
9 consolidating corporate functions. New challenges such as new office
10 leadership and Project Aim lie ahead. We look forward to meeting this
11 challenge. And now I'll turn the presentation over to Kriss Kennedy.

12 MR. KENNEDY: Thanks, Mike. Good morning,
13 Chairman, Commissioners. It's a privilege to be here on behalf of all of
14 the Regions to brief you on regional activities to enhance diversity in our
15 workforce.

16 With me today is Dr. Natasha Greene. Natasha is a
17 Radiation Protection Inspector in the Division of Reactor Safety, and
18 the Chair of the Region IV Advisory Committee for African Americans.
19 As Vonna indicated earlier, Natasha was recognized earlier this year
20 with a Meritorious Service Award for Equal Employment Opportunity
21 Excellence for her outstanding work in furthering diversity in Region IV.

22 I note that sitting next to Natasha is Jerome Murphy.
23 Jerome, after this meeting, is headed down to Region IV, Texas, to be
24 the Division Director for the Division of Resource Management and
25 Administration. I'd also note that Jerome's lanyard -- based on
26 Jerome's lanyard that he brings a diversity to Texas as a Pittsburgh

1 Steeler fan.

2 MR. MURPHY: Go Steelers.

3 MR. KENNEDY: That maybe we're limited on. So,
4 Jerome, we're looking forward to having you down in Texas. Next slide,
5 please.

6 Each day at work, I walk past a quilt that hangs on the
7 wall outside the Regional Administrator's office, and this quilt was
8 created several years ago by Region IV staff to celebrate and recognize
9 diversity in Region IV. It is made up of 25 individuals panels created by
10 the staff. Individually, the panels represent the cultures, heritage,
11 interests, and experiences of those that created them, and each panel
12 is connected or woven together to create a beautiful quilt. Each time I
13 pass by the quilt, I'm reminded of the diversity and collective strength of
14 our organization resulting from that diversity. And I'll point out that
15 Natasha was instrumental in the creation of this quilt. Next slide.

16 The dictionary defines diversity as a condition of
17 having or being composed of differing elements, especially the
18 inclusion of different types of people, such as people of different races
19 or cultures in a group or organization. In Region IV, we continuously
20 strive to achieve diversity in our workforce. Diversity in culture,
21 background, personal experiences, professional experiences, all
22 contributing to diversity in thought. Through diversity, we create a
23 more interesting and vibrant work environment. We are more
24 innovative, more productive, and we make better decisions. We value
25 diversity as a source of enrichment and opportunity. Next slide,
26 please.

1 Diversity at all levels in the organization is achieved
2 through our recruiting and hiring activities, and the development of our
3 staff through training and experiential opportunities. The value of
4 diversity in the workforce is achieved through education, awareness,
5 and recognition of the benefits that diversity brings to our decision
6 making and the accomplishment of our mission. Next slide, please.

7 Some of the Region IV activities and accomplishments
8 in the past year that we have been -- that we've used to support the
9 Comprehensive Diversity Management Plan include participation in
10 recruiting fairs at universities, including minority-serving institutions, at
11 professional organizations and veteran organizations, presentations to
12 student groups at universities, including minority-serving institutions,
13 experiential opportunities such as temporary promotions, rotational
14 assignments, and developmental assignments for the staff, training
15 opportunities, coaching and mentoring, staff participation in career days
16 and STEM or Science, Technology, Engineering and Math activities at
17 public schools, hosting visits by university students to the Region IV
18 office, including most recently Women In Nuclear from Texas A&M
19 University. And, finally, insuring that we have diverse rating panels to
20 support identifying the best qualified applicants for job openings.

21 Our goal is to meet the Nuclear Regulatory
22 Commission's Strategic Objectives and Region IV's office-level
23 operating plan measures within an environment that supports
24 openness, collaboration, and diversity. This plan is carried out at all
25 levels within Region IV, and we're not unique in the conduct of these
26 activities, as each region conducts similar activities. These activities

1 assist us in hiring a cadre of staff that will contribute to achieving the
2 mission of the NRC and develop our future leaders in the agency.

3 Next slide, please.

4 We have a very active Region IV Diversity
5 Management Advisory Committee led by Lola Gomez, with Advisory
6 Committees representing African Americans, Asian Pacific Americans,
7 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender employees, Employees with
8 Disabilities, Federal Women, Hispanics, Native Americans, older
9 Americans, and our newly formed Veteran Employee Resource Group.
10 In Region IV, veterans make up 43 percent of our workforce. Next slide,
11 please.

12 These committees sponsor various activities
13 throughout the year, not only to recognize and celebrate diversity, but
14 also to provide training workshops for the staff on a variety of subjects,
15 including building trust, giving and receiving feedback, and working as a
16 team to achieve our goals. We include fashion shows where Region
17 IV staff don and display cultural clothing and outfits, and we typically
18 include an international potluck lunch. Next slide, please.

19 We've had some very inspirational keynote speakers
20 at our diversity Day celebrations, and I'll highlight one, Clay Dyer. Clay
21 was born with a unique disability. He was born without any lower
22 limbs, no arm on the left side, and a partial arm on the right. Clay talked
23 about his experience as a disabled individual, and how his disability and
24 limitations had not dampened his determination and positive spirit. His
25 message was, "If I can, you can." And he shared his experience as a
26 disabled individual, a professional sport bass fisherman, and a family

1 man, bringing new perspective on acceptance, overcoming limitations,
2 and reaching goals. His dynamic presentation left the NRC staff
3 inspired, refreshed, and energized. Next slide, please.

4 Our recent Diversity Day Celebration theme was
5 Opening our Minds and Embracing Our Differences, and included
6 presentations by Ron Johnson, the President of the Prairie Island
7 Indian Community Tribal Council, and a presentation in recognition of
8 our veterans. These celebrations are an effective means to educate
9 each other on our different cultures, our capabilities, and increase our
10 awareness of the value of a diverse organization in accomplishing our
11 mission. They're also a great opportunity to enhance our safety
12 culture through training and workshops. Next slide.

13 As leaders in the NRC, we need to continuously insure
14 that we have a diverse organization to enhance our creativity, our
15 problem-solving, our strategic thinking, and our decision making. We
16 strive for a diverse organization, not because we have to, but because it
17 makes us a stronger and more effective organization.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to
19 discuss the activities that are occurring in Region IV, as well as the
20 other regions to insure that we have -- that we achieve and maintain a
21 diverse organization. And with that, I'll turn it over to Theresa Clark.

22 MS. CLARK: Thank you, Kriss. Good morning,
23 Chairman, Commissioners, Mr. McCree, and all who have joined us
24 here and remotely.

25 First, let me thank each of you for your personal
26 commitment to support diversity and inclusion. It's an honor to speak

1 to you today on behalf of the Diversity Management Advisory
2 Committee, or DMAC, which represents nine different organizations.
3 These are the Advisory Committee on African Americans, the Advisory
4 Committee for Employees with Disabilities, the Advisory Committee for
5 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender employees, the Asian Pacific
6 American Advisory Committee, the Diversity Advisory Committee on
7 Ageism, the Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee, the
8 Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee, the Native
9 American Advisory Committee, and the newly established Veterans
10 Employee Resource Group.

11 These organizations help make our agency a great
12 place to work by championing a variety of ideas, backgrounds, and
13 cultures. Alongside that variety, DMAC is a living example of the motto
14 that's on all of our coins, e pluribus unum, out of many, one. Our
15 organizations share similar goals, and we work best when we work
16 together across committees and with offices across the agency.

17 This year has been a busy one. I'd like to highlight just
18 a few of our many accomplishments. Our organization sponsored
19 numerous well attended celebrations recognizing our constituencies.
20 If you heard music and laughter filtering out from the auditorium, it's
21 likely that was one of our committee events. We also facilitated
22 multiple professional development seminars.

23 In September, as Joel mentioned, our members
24 enthusiastically participated in the agency's second Joint Equal
25 Employment Opportunity Conference. We appreciate the significant
26 efforts of the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights in executing this

1 program.

2 Our constituencies gained much over this past year.
3 I'm pleased to note that just last month an additional female joined the
4 agency's most senior leadership ranks as Jennifer Uhle became the
5 Director of the Office of New Reactors. In addition, Vonna Ordaz will
6 become Jennifer's Deputy in the spring, marking the first time that a
7 technical office has women in all of its office level management
8 positions. When Cathy Haney moves to Region II next year, half of the
9 regions will be led by women. Also, the agency welcomes this year its
10 first African American Executive Director for Operations.

11 Trends in performance appraisals and awards are
12 improving for employees over the age of 50, and representation of
13 African Americans and Hispanics in the feeder group of grades 13
14 through 15 looks promising.

15 Though I'm proud to acknowledge our many
16 accomplishments, I also want to describe two focus areas; fostering a
17 diverse future, and strengthening diversity in management. First, as
18 the Chairman mentioned, the agency is responding proactively to
19 challenging times to Project Aim. DMAC continues to emphasize the
20 essential nature of its activities in fostering the open, collaborative work
21 environment needed to execute our safety and security mission.

22 We're concerned about future demographics as we
23 right size. The proportions of staff across gender, race, and age have
24 been basically constant over the last several years, and may be
25 negatively affected as opportunities for hiring and promotion are limited.
26 This is particularly of concern for administrative and corporate staff

1 below Grade 13. Given the high numbers of minorities and women in
2 these disciplines, our attention to this group directly affects the agency's
3 overall goals. Also, the agency shapes its future through the Nuclear
4 Safety Professional Development Program. As Vonna mentioned,
5 however, the 2015 participant group included a proportion of females
6 and minorities well below that of the overall agency. We encourage
7 the agency to use its recruiting and hiring abilities to foster a diverse
8 future for the agency through this program.

9 The agency has room to improve its diversity and
10 management. I'll focus on women, but our committees have made
11 similar observations about minorities. Our proportion of females in the
12 senior executive service is still below the government-wide average,
13 although it's similar to that of other technical agencies, such as NASA.
14 Only three women currently lead major technical organizations. We're
15 pleased to see increasing diversity in our senior leadership, as I
16 mentioned before, and we look forward to having more women in our
17 agency's top positions.

18 The agency leaders of tomorrow come from today's
19 senior staff and supervisors. These groups are overwhelmingly male.
20 At Grade 12 and below, females represent more than four-fifths of the
21 total. By Grade 15, the fraction falls to a fourth. As Vonna mentioned,
22 the most recent Senior Executive Service Candidate Development
23 Program including an even smaller fraction, four women among 26
24 candidates. Only two of these women came from technical offices,
25 and none of the women were minorities. We must do better. We must
26 demonstrate our commitment to diversity at all levels. DMAC will

1 continue to be proactive in our focus on career development and to
2 support the agency in analyzing available data. We look forward to
3 additional agency efforts to understand and address the root causes of
4 these disparities.

5 To summarize, we live in a diverse and interconnected
6 world. At work, our variety and our cooperation make us stronger.
7 We look forward to an agency that reflects the outside world at all
8 levels, and we look forward to working with our partners to achieve it.
9 Thank you for your attention, and I'll turn it back to Mr. McCree.

10 MR. McCREE: Thank you, Theresa. As you've heard
11 this morning, people in the NRC recognize that we're more innovative,
12 more productive, that we make smarter and better decisions when
13 we're willing to embrace and leverage the talent of people with diverse
14 experiences and perspectives, but we're not perfect. We continue to
15 emphasize the importance of improvement in both how we engage in a
16 healthy way in difficult conversations, and how we actively listen to one
17 another. Doing so cultivates an environment where everyone feels
18 included and valued, which I think is a hallmark of any open
19 collaborative work environment.

20 I challenge each member of the NRC to do their part to
21 display our value of openness and respect by continuing to embrace
22 diversity and demonstrate our excellence value by actively supporting
23 our ongoing Change Management efforts.

24 I'd be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge the fact that
25 this is Vonna's last Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
26 briefing as Director of the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights, so I

1 want to publicly thank her and commend her and her staff for their
2 outstanding, her for her outstanding leadership, and her and her team
3 for doing a fine job. So, on behalf of your colleagues both here in the
4 room and who've joined us from the regions, and who have benefitted
5 from your hard work in these important areas, well done.

6 (Applause)

7 MR. McCREE: Chairman and Commissioners, this
8 concludes our remarks, and we're ready for your questions.

9 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well, thank you all for your
10 presentations. We'll begin questions this morning with Commissioner
11 Ostendorff.

12 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Thank you,
13 Chairman. Thank you for your briefings and your presence here today.

14 I look around the room and I -- as many of the
15 Commission members have commented on previous sessions, we're
16 always very pleased to see this robust engagement by folks sitting
17 behind you. And the significant cross-agency involvement of many of
18 you in trying to embrace diversity initiatives, et cetera, is very
19 refreshing. So, I note the very large attendance here today, but it's not
20 unique. We've seen this at prior meetings, as well, so that just is a real
21 credit to the leadership at this table that I'm looking at, but also the
22 people here behind you, and the various office directors across the
23 agency.

24 Not all agencies have this kind of meeting. I've served
25 many years at the Department of Defense, Department of Energy,
26 worked on Capitol Hill, and I'll just tell you, this is the first -- you know,

1 I've been in the workforce close to 40 years now, the first agency I've
2 been at where there has been significant continued ongoing focus on
3 these types of initiatives, and I think that's something just to pause and
4 comment on as important, because it shows the leadership focus. And
5 while as Victor and Vonna mentioned, we still have much more work to
6 do, the good news is that we're talking about these issues in a very
7 open manner with the highest levels of the agency. That does not
8 always happen.

9 I add, Vonna, my thanks to that of Victor for your
10 leadership. And while we all know that you have a very strong team in
11 SBCR, your leadership is evident in the accomplishments and the
12 progress your organization has made during your time in charge, so
13 we're all very grateful. And congratulations on your new assignment.

14 Let me ask -- comment, and then I'm going to ask a
15 couple of questions here for Vonna and Vic. On the SES CDP
16 selection stats, I appreciate your highlighting that, and I just
17 would -- you know, think it's important for the Commission after you had
18 your January 2016 meeting, for us to get some feedback when you
19 have your briefing coming up here next month on this topic. But I do
20 want to ask a question, perhaps of Vonna, and then anybody else from
21 the NSPDP piece as far as the demographics. And those have been
22 commented on by Theresa, in addition to Vonna's comments.

23 Are there any observations or comments you have on
24 the population pool? You did mention minority-serving institutions, but
25 I want to see more broadly, is the pool of applicants for these
26 slots -- how diverse is that group?

1 MS. ORDAZ: In the SES CDP, we are seeing diverse
2 applicants, so the pool is there to a certain degree. But what we need
3 to do is more in terms of helping to grow and develop these individuals
4 so they can more competitively selected. There's been a number of
5 activities such as mentoring and shadowing, and all other events, but I
6 think we need to do a more concerted effort, and I'm confident that the
7 ERB will come to some solutions in that area to help make it more
8 plentiful in the future.

9 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Victor?

10 MR. McCREE: Commissioner, first of all, I do
11 appreciate your question. I think it's a very valuable one, and at its core
12 is the value and effort that we place in leadership development and
13 talent management, otherwise known as Succession Planning. Our
14 focus as a Senior Leadership Team over the last 12 to 18 months has
15 been on the Executive Team, current Executives. I believe that there
16 are lessons that we're learning and have learned that are applicable
17 that we can apply in terms of developing people for executive
18 leadership roles, that we can apply at the supervisory level and below to
19 further enrich the pool, if you would, of people across the board,
20 including folks with diverse backgrounds and experiences, such that
21 they're more competitive, if you would, when they apply for an SES
22 Candidate Development Program. So, we will be more intentional about
23 those activities in the future.

24 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Okay, thank you.

25 I'll just comment that the Small Business Program
26 accomplishments are significant, demonstrates ongoing leadership,

1 solid management and attention to detail, so I just applaud those
2 involved in those efforts.

3 Joel, I want to go to your Slide 11, if I can, just for a
4 moment.

5 MR. KRAVETZ: Of course.

6 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: And I wanted to -- I
7 think Slide 11. Yes, the -- you made a statement that the NRC
8 promotion, non-selection claims increased from 9 percent to 18
9 percent. And I know that we're dealing with some small numbers
10 overall, but put aside the numbers just for a minute. Are there any
11 Lessons Learned you're seeing from your experience that gets into
12 clarity of performance evaluation expectations, performance objectives
13 where people are being formally counseled at midyear reports, report
14 time periods. I'm trying to understand, you know, standards and what
15 expectations are. Anything you've learned in that area?

16 MR. KRAVETZ: At this point, it would be premature to
17 draw any Lessons Learned from the complaints filed in Fiscal Year
18 2015, in large part because they're still in investigation.

19 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Okay.

20 MR. KRAVETZ: Or they haven't been adjudicated yet
21 because they're new complaints. They're not -- the few promotion
22 claims that we've have, and you pointed out it only takes a few to
23 increase the percentage, the finding of discrimination that was made by
24 the District Court Judge was also a non-promotion or a non-selection
25 claim. So, the Lessons Learned in large part from that can probably be
26 carried over. And I know there will be training provided in 2016 to

1 managers and supervisors in that area, so that hopefully the agency as
2 a whole, and those who are empowered to make selection decisions
3 will be better trained in the area to avoid the mistakes of the past.

4 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Okay, thank you.

5 Mike, I appreciate your highlighting the Office of
6 Research activities, and highlighting how its engaged in change. A
7 couple of things caught my attention, the play on words, Moving On Up
8 the Pike Newsletter, and the CHILL becoming Research Embrace, so I
9 appreciate, in particular, your highlighting the Office of Research staff
10 participation in the various EEO Advisory Committees. That's really
11 important for us to support, but please pass on our Commission's
12 acknowledgment of that representation on the EEO Advisory
13 Committees.

14 MR. CASE: Okay, will do.

15 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: And I was also
16 pleased to see the FAS results. In particular, I look at Tony Barnes,
17 my Navy colleague here in his work in this agency on inclusion, quotient
18 implementation and how the agency overall stacks up compared to the
19 rest of the Federal government in this area. So, I think Tony is back
20 there. Getting on you, Tony, for your efforts in this area.

21 Kriss, I have to maybe have a different professional
22 opinion on your advice to Jerome.

23 (Laughter)

24 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: While it is certainly
25 an option for Jerome to introduce a great diverse element in going down
26 to Arlington for his -- with his Steelers lanyard, and I know Miriam is look

1 at me, as well, and if Bill Magwood were here, he would have the same
2 comment. I'll also note there's also an alternative option for Jerome to
3 consider, getting with the program.

4 (Laughter)

5 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Been a complaint
6 made the last two times I've gone down to Region IV before I've gone to
7 the office, each time I've gone, there's a Waffle House right there off
8 Lamar Boulevard that's looking out over the stadium. I won't say it's a
9 religious experience, but Tammy Bloomer on my staff in one trip, who's
10 a big Steeler fan, and Amy Cabbage on my staff is a big Patriot fan have
11 had to endure breakfast with me there. So maybe, Kriss, you could
12 take Jerome to breakfast there and have him open his eyes a little bit
13 wider to the new environment he'll be in.

14 MR. KENNEDY: Commissioner, I do take pleasure in
15 knowing that Jerome's office overlooks AT&T Stadium.

16 (Applause)

17 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: There is justice.
18 We're very pleased to see Jerome assume this new position, so we
19 wish you well, Jerome.

20 Kriss, thanks for highlighting the Region IV efforts, you
21 know, especially what you've done with your committee structures, and
22 with Natasha's efforts, appreciate it greatly. Any changes you've seen
23 to Region IV, any change or two you want to highlight that you've
24 implemented as a result of some of the Diversity Management Advisory
25 Committee recommendations?

26 MR. KENNEDY: I think we -- and Natasha can provide

1 any input she wants to, as well, but I think the DMAC Committee is very
2 focused on making the diversity day celebrations more than just
3 celebrations, and so they work with Mark and I, too, on what kind of
4 workshops and training do they want to bring to the region? And, so,
5 we've had a number of good presentations and training opportunities,
6 and workshops, and I mentioned a couple, building trust and giving and
7 receiving feedback. So, I think the committees are very good about
8 working with us and recognizing areas that we can enhance our culture,
9 our workplace culture and provide that training to the staff. And that
10 has carried on over the last several years, bringing that training to the
11 region.

12 COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Okay, thank you.

13 Theresa, just -- and I'm out of time. I just want to thank
14 you for representing the Advisory Committees here today, and for
15 highlighting the significant role they play in this agency's health and
16 welfare, so thank you. Thank you all.

17 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thank you, Commissioner.
18 Commissioner Baran.

19 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Thanks. Well, thank you all
20 for your presentations, and really more importantly for all the work
21 you're doing to promote diversity and inclusion at NRC. Vonna, I want to
22 join Vic and Commissioner Ostendorff in thanking you for the terrific
23 work you've done over the last few years. Thank you for that. It really
24 does show.

25 I appreciate that -- I was going to ask about NSPDP
26 and that class, and the SES Candidate Development Program class,

1 and the under-representation we're seeing there particularly with
2 respect to women. And I appreciate that you asked about that, and I
3 appreciate the comments that Vic made about that. I think that's
4 something we really need to focus on and turn around, because those
5 numbers are pretty low, you know, for women in those programs. And
6 they're important programs for all the reasons that people have
7 discussed. And just in hearing the presentations and preparing for the
8 meeting ahead of time, I was pretty struck by those numbers.

9 As Theresa discussed, the Joint Advisory Committee
10 statement expressed some concern about the potential consequences
11 of expected staffing reductions on the agency's diversity. And so far it
12 looks like from the demographic data we're not losing ground on
13 diversifying the agency and its workforce.

14 Vonna, can you talk a little bit about how we make sure
15 that future staffing reductions don't result in a less diverse workforce
16 here?

17 MS. ORDAZ: Certainly. And I also welcome OCHCO
18 to add anything they'd like to. Clearly, you know, it has to be a
19 collaborative effort across many programs, OCHCO, SBCR, agency
20 Managers and others to help maintain and retain a diverse workforce.
21 There's all types of career enhancing opportunities, but it will be a
22 challenge. And I would just offer that we have to continue doing more
23 of developing every employee in the agency, men, women, minorities,
24 individuals with disabilities, veterans to help retain the folks that we
25 have on staff, as well as in the targeted recruitment areas to focus and
26 be more broad in our mind set in how we make those selections. And

1 it's not about picking -- you know, having a certain numerical
2 component of your organization, but it's folks from different
3 backgrounds and experiences. We have seen some wonderful results
4 when we broaden our thinking to expand our teams.

5 MR. McCREE: I can't say anything else. I think Vonna
6 has said it all.

7 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Okay, thanks.

8 I wanted to just ask about, the background materials
9 indicated that the agency used the Alaska Native Corporation 8(a)
10 Program for the first time this year, and I just wanted to hear a little bit
11 more about that, how many contracts were awarded, were these
12 sole-source contracts, or competitive contracts? Can someone just
13 give us a little bit more description about developments in that area?

14 MS. ORDAZ: Certainly. I will ask James to come up to
15 the podium, but just a little background. Alaska Native Corporations are
16 companies where the shareholders are comprised of Alaskan Natives
17 and their descendants. You know, what we do is we decide -- we work
18 closely with AMD on identifying who are -- you know, through our
19 collaborative process, we vet all of the different types of companies so
20 we can make sure that we have the most capable company to support
21 the NRC's requirement. But in terms of the value and the numerics, I'll
22 let James answer that.

23 MR. CORBETT: Yes, we awarded two this year, one
24 was the Navarro, the administrative assistant and secretarial and
25 administrative services contract. That one is governed by the
26 Department of Labor rates, so one of the things that we always have to

1 do, Vonna mentioned, are they capable. We also have to insure that
2 they're good value. We don't get out of that by going a socioeconomic
3 route, so we did Navarro. And we also did -- recently awarded to Talu.
4 It's a company -- it's an Alaska Native company that does -- is going to
5 do all the furniture for the facilities. So, anything we do related to
6 furniture, those are the two that we did.

7 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Okay. And tell us a little bit
8 about -- so, if --

9 CHAIRMAN BURNS: And, Jim, can you just identify
10 yourself so we have --

11 MR. CORBETT: Oh, James Corbett. I'm the Director of
12 the Acquisition Management Division in the Office of Administration.

13 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks. Sorry.

14 COMMISSIONER BARAN: No, go ahead, or I should
15 go ahead.

16 (Laughter)

17 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I'm going ahead now. So,
18 in cases where under this program the agency awards a sole-source
19 contract, tell us a little more. How do we make sure we're getting good
20 value for our money in that case? In the absence of competition,
21 which would normally discipline the prices, how do we make sure we're
22 getting a good price, getting good value under the contract?

23 MR. CORBETT: Well, even though -- what those
24 programs give us is sort of a streamlined competition in the sense that
25 we can select a company that we determine is capable. It doesn't
26 relieve us at all from doing our due diligence, so we do market research,

1 we do a government cost estimate internal to the agency. In these
2 cases, we had copious historical data on what we've paid in the past for
3 those type of services. We had contracts for the furniture, for instance.
4 We also had secretarial services. And, again, I mentioned earlier that
5 the secretarial side is covered by Department of Labor. They set a
6 standard for those categories, so we have to pay that. So, that one is a
7 little bit easier knowing that we got it. We check GSA schedules, we
8 do a lot of work to make sure that we can do price reasonableness, is
9 the price they're charging us reasonable? We also do a lot with past
10 performance, where have they done this work? In the case of the
11 furniture, NIH and other large agencies, they handle all of their furniture,
12 so they're quite capable, and we check the past performance.

13 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Thank you. Thank you
14 very much. Thanks, again, to everyone for all your work.

15 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thank you, Commissioner. I
16 could pile on this Steelers thing. Jerome, I will send you a picture I took
17 on behalf of my daughter who lives in Pittsburgh. On my beer cozie it
18 says Yinz are in Stiller Country in front of the Eiffel Tower, so not only
19 will we have there, but we have at least two people in France, or did at
20 that time. Anyway, I do want to thank you all for your presentations.

21 I think the interesting thing about the presentations we
22 had here today, we're talking about particular programs, structures that
23 get us on the right track in terms of diversity and inclusion, assuring
24 that, you know, in accordance with the laws of this country that rights
25 are protected.

26 We also talk about what I'll call a lot of, you know, some

1 people say the soft things. And that -- which are very important, I think,
2 to the fabric of really our society, and fabric -- and important to
3 improving the diversity and inclusiveness of our society. And those are
4 things like our heritage dinners that we have, the events that have been
5 described in the regions, the types of things that Mike was discussing.
6 I think one of the great things I think that I've noticed since returning is I
7 think the focus in some of our committees is looking at not only, you
8 know, celebrating the committee -- the committee celebrating diversity,
9 but also focusing on what can I do, what can we do as a committee to
10 improve opportunity for our employees, and also -- those all are sort of
11 bound together. A lot of them -- those are, as I say -- when I say soft
12 things, they're soft things because, you know, you can't hold on to it, but
13 they are very important, I think. So, building into the structures that we
14 have in terms of what we're doing.

15 I want to focus on a couple of things. Again, Vonna, I
16 express my appreciation for your service in SBCR and, of course, wish
17 you well in your new opportunity. But give me a chance for sort of
18 recollection over, you know, what you've learned, what you've seen
19 over the last few years, what are your sort of observations from your
20 experience?

21 MS. ORDAZ: I could go on for a long time. What I
22 would offer, though, is I've seen in the past four years really a change in
23 relationships across the agency. We were originally pretty much stove
24 piped in many ways across offices, and across even committees, if you
25 will. And there's been much more of a blending. You know, coming
26 from the technical side and now in a corporate office, I just see -- and

1 I've been interested in this in many meetings that we have, how do we
2 get the two components closer together? But I've seen a lot more
3 relationship-building. I've seen more committees working across each
4 other's groups to come together, to join together for one common goal.
5 And it's really been a strong showing over the years, whether it's the fun
6 Jeopardy game where everyone comes together and ASLBP always
7 wins, or it's, you know, some of the other joint events where they're
8 really focused on recruiting and helping with, you know, mentoring and
9 resume writing for some of these programs such as SES CDP. So, I
10 think that's really been strong.

11 I've seen more interest and support from the
12 leadership across the agency, and I think that has been very
13 remarkable. We'd like to really focus at the middle level management.
14 I think there's some work to do there, and they're very busy. First-line
15 supervisors, in particular, extremely busy, I know, but more support in
16 their area would be helpful.

17 I've also seen with all my interactions downtown with
18 my colleagues from other agencies and with the EEOC, I've seen quite
19 a bit of how NRC is viewed from the outside, and it's pretty remarkable,
20 almost embarrassing sometimes because, you know, we'll talk to our
21 colleagues from EEOC and they'll say okay, so what can we -- what do
22 you see that we can do better? And they'll say -- they'll laugh and say
23 no, we look at you, we look at your agency, whether it be the OCHCO
24 Programs, or the -- you know, our programs across the agency, there's
25 been some very -- people model, truly model some of the things that we
26 do here. And it's not just our office, it's the whole agency. So, that

1 really -- it makes you feel good, but then it makes you want to work
2 harder to keep up the great effort that we're doing here at the NRC.

3 CHAIRMAN BURNS: All right, great. One of the things
4 that struck me, I think, from a couple of presenters, I think, including you
5 and Joel, if you look at some of the complaints -- in the complaints area
6 in terms of the hostile work environment. That's the example that strikes
7 me, but also efforts, I think, talking about this dialogue effort and things
8 like that which really, I think, go to -- and I know, I think it's either -- it
9 may have been the last meeting either Sheryl or Maria, and we'll hear
10 from NTEU later, but I think we're making that point about in terms of
11 sort of -- you know, it's the civility. I think what is it, Howard County had
12 a civility matters bumper sticker a few years ago from the school
13 system, I think, sponsored. But, I mean, I think that's a good thing
14 to -- I think that address -- you know, we don't know in terms of
15 particular -- when you look at particular complaints and all that, but I
16 think it's a good way of connecting where work, you know, where work
17 may -- can pay off, is this sort of, you know, encouraging civil dialogue,
18 you know, respectful exchange of views and things like that. And I
19 know coming out of, you know, my last experience where -- and I've
20 said to those people before, one of the differences was, you know, I had
21 to get consensus, which means nobody was ticked off enough to raise
22 their hand and say no to something. And a lot of that, I mean, in terms
23 of -- you know, my own personal experience and sort of increasing that
24 across different national cultures and national, you know, policies and
25 things like that. It's that kind of, you know, encouraging that kind of
26 civil dialogue in that sphere, but also I think in our's. So, I encourage

1 those efforts and the learnings we can get from that.

2 I think that those efforts, I think, will pay off in the long run.

3 One of the things I want to ask, in terms of -- I think you
4 mentioned using opportunities like the HBCU Conference, National
5 Congress of American Indians Conference, can you tell me a little bit
6 more about what we're doing at those types of conferences that's sort of
7 putting us forward, Tuwanda?

8 MS. SMITH: Well, I'll start with the National Congress
9 of American Indians. That's an excellent segue. What we do, for
10 example, the Tribal Colleges and Universities Program interact with
11 different segments of the community, we help build educational
12 opportunities, employment. We work on problems, issues, and
13 concerns. We're really the segue in the first phase that people see
14 about assistance and support to those particular groups, so the
15 contracting part of that, the grant part of that, the ongoing support and
16 assistance allows the communities to be open to the technical aspect of
17 the NRC and the regulatory processes. So, sometimes when you're
18 doing inspections or things of that nature, you're focused on carrying
19 out that deliverable, but the people part of that, get to know NRC a little
20 bit different in a better light, and are more receptive, so it blends
21 together because our community, education, employment, condition
22 climate or the environment, all those things kind of generate and gel
23 together. So, outreach is very important to what we do.

24 The other part is when we work on like Environmental
25 Justice Conference, we are helping our colleagues be able to interface
26 around the world with other Federal agencies to talk about best

1 practices and things of interest, to talk to people in the communities and
2 have them get involved. One of the things I really liked over the almost
3 10 years I've been here is the idea of public involvement and interest,
4 and that we bring something to the table. So, those are the kind of
5 outreach things, and they kind of blend across what our mission is, what
6 the agency's overall mission is.

7 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes. I think -- thanks for that. I
8 think those are great opportunities. A lot of you have talked
9 about -- whether it's formal conferences, NCAI, or HBCU, it's going out
10 into schools, you know, getting out into community organizations,
11 because I do think, and those are planning -- I think I talked at one -- I
12 remember talking to Tony about going to -- my daughter used to work
13 for the Girl Scouts, had me come speak to a Girl Scout conference in
14 Johnstown, PA. And about three or four young women, early teens,
15 high schoolers come up to me and said well, I'm interested in math and
16 science. I'm interested in those types of things. So, doing that, I think
17 we get our brand out, if you will, our name out there. And, again,
18 understanding what we do, giving an understanding of what we do,
19 what the opportunities are. So, I encourage those types of activities.

20 Going back to the recruiting thing, are -- do you all
21 see -- you mentioned in terms of the minority grant -- the serving
22 institution, the grants program, are there particular things we ought to
23 be looking -- and it looks like we -- I didn't look at particular statistics, but
24 we have some success transferring or transitioning people potentially
25 into NRC employment. Are there other things we can do with that in
26 terms of looking at that program that sort of helps? Because I know,

1 and having been in Margie's position before, it can be tough sometimes.
2 I remember in the Honors Program sometimes it was tough there
3 getting entry-level folks in, so we wound up at one point switching
4 to -- I'm sorry, I'm going -- we were switching into sort of mid-level
5 recruiting, so I don't know what -- if there are any ideas you have. And
6 then I'll stop.

7 MS. ORDAZ: I think continued education to the
8 first-line supervisors, the selecting officials to make sure they know that
9 is available, that you can non-competitively select these individuals.
10 And, honestly, I've been here for 25 years almost now, and didn't know
11 that existed until I came to this office, but we've been working really
12 close with our colleagues in OCHCO, and they've been doing a
13 wonderful job getting the word out to first-line supervisors through all
14 their different avenues. But it's really always, you know, when you're
15 making these selections it doesn't have to be somebody that looks like
16 us. It can be somebody that has a different background, and part of it's
17 culture, part of it's mind set. And we just always need to pick the most
18 qualified individual, but we need to be open to all the avenues we can
19 choose from.

20 MS. SMITH: I just wanted to add, another piece of that
21 is that our offices are very good in going out to the institutions to talk
22 about what it's like in the workplace and, therefore, we have instances
23 where they literally mold or model the curriculum around what's really
24 going on in the day to day activity of the world here so that we easily
25 transition from the classroom to the workplace. And when our offices
26 can see that there is a feeder group out there, they're more open to that.

1 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Okay, great. Thanks, Tuwanda.

2 MS. ORDAZ: Can I just mention one other thing?

3 Tuwanda and her team have done a lot of work over the years to
4 partner minority-serving institutions with those institutions of higher
5 education, and they've had a lot of successes. We won't go into detail
6 on them today, but that has really helped. It's almost the train the trainer
7 concept, so there's really a pipeline to help encourage those individuals
8 to enhance their skills.

9 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Okay, thanks. Commissioner
10 Svinicki.

11 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Well, good morning,
12 everyone. And I want to thank everyone for their presentations. And,
13 also, as Commissioner Baran noted, really all of the efforts that go on all
14 year long on the activities we're discussing today.

15 Vonna, I appreciate that you talked about, you know,
16 it's embarrassing that the NRC is frequently held up as a model, but I
17 also appreciate that Victor mentioned up front that there's always work
18 to be done. And that this is a journey, and we have to keep striving.
19 So, you know, we balance the fact that we have significant
20 accomplishments, which we applaud, and commend, and we should
21 take time to be gratified by that. But I always am struck by the
22 self-critical honesty that we present at this meeting, which I think is very
23 helpful. And that's always a prelude to someone who's going to be real
24 honest, because I love honesty. So, let me be honest.

25 On the SES CDP selection, so I just -- I want to share
26 some observations. And I know that all of you look at these things a

1 lot more systematically, so please take this for what it's worth. My
2 experiences here as a Commissioner, you know, are anecdotal, and I
3 just observe the things that are available to me. But I struggled a bit, I
4 have no basis for fault the selections in this particular class of
5 candidates, but I know that some of the non-selected applicants feel
6 some level of discouragement and perhaps a lack of understanding of
7 why they weren't selected, so I know among the activities you're looking
8 at is perhaps better feedback.

9 Perception is not always accurate, but perceptions is
10 very, very powerful, and we need to remember that. Future diversity in
11 SES CDP classes will be directly correlated to whether or not these
12 applicants and others with whom they discuss the process, their faith in
13 the selection process is very important. And if they become
14 discouraged, now we're basically asking people to perhaps try again in
15 the future. They're willingness to do that is going to be correlated to
16 their view of the overall selection process. So, I think that helping them
17 to have the understanding and feedback of why they were not selected
18 is absolutely essential to future diversity in the SES CDP. So, I would
19 just remind you of that and I'm, you know, aware of some instances I
20 think of personal discouragement. I'm not sure. I tried to encourage
21 people, you know, to seek that feedback and apply again in the future,
22 but it takes some amount of labor on their part. And I think we should
23 all care a lot about how the non-selectees understand that process. I
24 think that that's essential going forward.

25 I did want to say that, Theresa, I appreciate a very
26 thoughtful statement you made on behalf of the committees, and

1 particularly your acknowledgment the GS-12 and below, how our
2 diversity statistics are different there. And if we are looking at certain
3 categories of skills in that area, that the agency finds that we might have
4 a shrinking need. I would say in addition to going out and hiring from
5 those who benefit from some of our grants programs, I think that we
6 should strike a balance with opportunities to develop employees that
7 may not have the skill sets right now. We know that they are
8 outstanding performers, they're longstanding agency employees, so I
9 hope that in addition to taking advantage of the rich set of applicants
10 that we get from outside the agency, we don't forget that there are
11 important opportunities to take solid contributors here at NRC and
12 develop them into skills categories where we may project that we will
13 have a greater need in the future, or we project that we, you know, will
14 maybe have retirements. So, I think you need to balance going
15 outside versus cultivating what you have. And, again, it's just -- I'm not
16 faulting it. I'm just saying it's important to be mindful of both.

17 I do think that some of our IQ scores are clearly the
18 strength of Fed survey results in some of those areas. It's clearly an
19 outgrowth of a lot of the activities that we talked about today, the
20 indicators that are baked into the inclusion quotient. I think I have a
21 direct correlation with a lot of the activities that we've talked about
22 today.

23 I do want to say, though, on succession planning as a
24 broad topic, which Victor, I think, you integrated into one of your
25 responses. Again, my experiences are anecdotal, but I -- you know,
26 every year that goes by, I have another year's worth of observations.

1 And Vonna said, you know, we don't have to pick people who look like
2 us, but I hope to continue to grow my confidence that as we look at
3 succession planning, we challenge our assumptions about what it takes
4 to be a successful future EDO, what it takes to be a successful General
5 Counsel. Because it is human nature to look for well, the type of
6 people who have been successful Directors of NRR, look like this, and
7 have this background. And I think that you have to constantly
8 challenge yourself to say why couldn't a future successful EDO have a
9 very different skill set, have a very different career journey, and just be a
10 very different type of person? I think you reflexively kind of go to well,
11 this is the profile of people who have done this in the past. Because,
12 Vonna, you said you don't have to pick people who look like us, or look
13 like the incumbent, but we have to pick qualified people. What I'm
14 asking us to do is dig to that layer saying we make assumptions about
15 what it is to be qualified for these jobs. I don't know why. This is
16 probably going to be controversial. I don't know why a future EDO
17 couldn't come out of the legal professions here? We have a lot of -- so,
18 I think we have -- so we profile in a way. I think it's just something that
19 we do, and make assumptions about who will be successful. And then
20 that just gets embedded into these, you know, panels of qualifications
21 and how the factors we're looking at, and how they get rated. So, I'm
22 asking us to peel those layers back of, you know -- I know -- well, and
23 the other thing you might say is well, you know, but this agency has
24 been pretty darned successful, Commissioner Svinicki, so why do you
25 want to challenge that? If success in General Counsels and EDOs has
26 looked like a certain thing, why challenge it? But we don't know what

1 we're missing out on, I guess is what I'm trying to say.

2 So, I look to grow, to continue to grow my confidence
3 that the ERB and other panels that, again, this is another challenge, are
4 composed of the type of people who've already been successful in
5 these positions. So, is that an inherent mindset that causes us to say a
6 successful director, you know, of NMSS looks like this, just because
7 they've always looked like that.

8 So, this gets way beyond, you know, I think some of the
9 more apparent on the surface things of race and gender. It really gets
10 to what kind of people could be successful? And, you know, I get
11 asked this, what makes a successful NRC Commissioner? And my
12 answer is always, I think really different types of people can be a
13 successful NRC Commissioner. And I know the leadership ranks
14 here, we need people with specific technical skill sets and
15 competencies. And I'm not saying we should ever shortchange that.
16 But I think -- and, you know, I'll be honest enough to tell you some of
17 what I base this observation on, is I'll engage with some of our rising
18 generation of NRC employees and professionals, and I'll be so
19 impressed by them, so I'll mention to their management or their boss'
20 boss' boss, and I'll say well, you know, so and so was here at this facility
21 when I visited, very impressive individual. And they'll say oh, you
22 know, that person could be a future EDO or Office Director. And a lot
23 of times I hear that about people who look a lot like the EDOs and Office
24 Directors that we've had. And then I think well, why not so and so, or
25 somebody else? You know, why -- so, again, just -- so everyone is
26 well intentioned, but those biases and, you know, we are a product of

1 our experiences. And it takes a constant questioning attitude, which is
2 great in nuclear because that's the mindset we have, but I think even we
3 can continually challenge ourselves about assumptions, about what
4 kind of person is likely to be successful doing what? And if they don't
5 have some of the requisite skill set, we have a lot of these wonderful
6 activities and programs that I think give us opportunities to equip those
7 people with maybe the narrow elements of this or that that they lack.
8 So, I guess this is my little sermonizing from the table, but I just ask all
9 of us really to be challenging ourselves all the time. Even in my own
10 office I have administrative assistant positions, and historically I think
11 Commissioners, you know, model after what other Commissioners
12 have done, and divvy up work. Then in my office people will come to
13 me and say well, do I ask your Chief of Staff about that? And I say no,
14 you ask my administrative assistant, Janet. You know, she handles it.
15 So, we need to think differently about just, you know, what is each
16 person capable of contributing? Not what their job title is, but what
17 capacities do they have, and how could we even advance that further?

18 So, thus ends the sermon. I don't know if anyone wants
19 to respond at all --

20 MS. ORDAZ: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: -- to what I've said. An
22 amen chorus is fine.

23 (Applause)

24 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you very much.

25 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Thank you. I just
26 wanted to say that the words are very encouraging. We greatly

1 appreciate it. And it's all about removing barriers and biases. And one
2 of the things --

3 MS. ORDAZ: But --

4 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: It's just that we
5 don't -- unless we really challenge it, we don't know that they're there.

6 MS. ORDAZ: You're absolutely right. So, we're really
7 encouraged by this diversity dialogue project we mentioned earlier,
8 because it's all about looking at those types of things. What's really on
9 your mind, and does it need to be on your mind? How can you change
10 that mindset and that culture that you've always had? So, we're really
11 encouraged by that. Thank you for your words.

12 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Okay, thank you. And I
13 look -- I hope you're well rested because I look forward to all the
14 contributions you are going to make in New Reactors. Thank you.

15 MR. McCREE: And, Chairman, if I might.
16 Commissioner, the only thing I'd add, the Chairman had mentioned our
17 programs, our processes, our hard programs and processes that put us
18 in an area where we can leverage diversity in all that we do. And then
19 the soft activities. I think that's a great analogy.

20 One hard programmatic activity we've been engaged
21 in as a Senior Leadership Team over the last year and a half, I believe
22 sets a -- will create an environment where we can be more open, if you
23 would, and looking at an individual's performance and the roles that he
24 or she has had, as well as their potential, are the two dimensions that
25 we're focused -- have been focused on, as opposed to their
26 "qualification and expertise," if you would. So, I believe that will open

1 the aperture a bit in our ability to develop people in a way that when we
2 are at a point where we're implementing selections, that we're able to
3 consider a more diverse pool. So, it is a journey, and we're well on our
4 way to getting to an even better destination.

5 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thank you. At this point,
6 we'll -- I invite forward Maria Schwartz to speak on behalf of the NTEU.
7 Maria is the Chapter Executive Vice President Chief Steward of the
8 National Treasury Employees Union Chapter here at the NRC.
9 Welcome, Maria.

10 MS. SCHWARTZ: Thank you. Good morning,
11 Chairman Burns, Commissioners, EDO McCree, NRC Managers and
12 my fellow bargaining unit employees. It's a pleasure to be able to
13 address you again on behalf of the NTEU in this forum.

14 NTEU, as we stress at these meetings, is the exclusive
15 representative of our bargaining unit employees. I'm joined this
16 morning by NTEU Chapter 208's President, Sheryl Burrows, and
17 several of our officers and stewards.

18 As the scheduling note for this briefing points out, its
19 purpose is to provide the Commission with a semi-annual update on the
20 progress and opportunities related to Civil Rights Outreach and Equal
21 Opportunity. This is a very important briefing because it keeps the
22 agency focused on the importance of inclusion and diversity for
23 organizational good health.

24 In that respect, all members of the NRC family should
25 celebrate our progress in this area. And as our EDO mentioned also,
26 we must be mindful of the challenges that confront us. This forum is

1 also important because it provides a mechanism to bring our successes
2 and challenges in this area to the Commission's attention.

3 As I worked on our safety culture policy statement a
4 few years ago, I looked at the several studies addressing organizational
5 culture that stress that organizational climate or culture is always
6 controlled by the leader.

7 NTEU has been focusing many of its comments over
8 the last year on the important role that supervisors play within the
9 agency. This morning, I would like to continue that focus as I speak to
10 one of the challenges that our agency faces; specifically, the challenge
11 of the double standard in the workplace.

12 Merriam Webster defines double standard as a set of
13 principles that applies differently and usually more rigorously to one
14 group of people or circumstances than to another. It's easy to see why
15 those experiencing the negative consequences of a double standard
16 become demoralized and complacent. The slides you saw earlier
17 illustrate areas where employees feel that they are being treated
18 differently than their colleagues because they are members of a
19 protected class. Double standards of behavior create imbalances in an
20 organization, and create mistrust. The bottom line is the old cliché,
21 "Double standards never work at work."

22 Unfortunately, NTEU continues to see disparate
23 treatment, this double standard approach across the agency in various
24 settings. As the Affirmative Employee Specialist in SBCR can attest,
25 NTEU has been a steadfast advocate for our employees who have
26 suffered under such treatment based on their inclusion in a protected

1 class, accompanying them to intake discussions and in mediation
2 meetings.

3 Since the collective bargaining agreement was
4 recently revised to include a mass dignity clause, NTEU can now also
5 advise our employees that they have the additional option of filing a
6 grievance to address instances where relationships in the workplace
7 are not conducted in a civil business-like manner.

8 None of these avenues, however, will prevent double
9 standards from continuing unless there is an ongoing commitment to
10 our agency's values. Because within those isacre values bookended
11 by integrity and in respect there is no room for double standards.
12 Sometimes it's called favoritism, sometimes it's called discrimination,
13 sometimes it's called passing the buck. It doesn't always have a
14 specific label, but it in all cases it is a flawed and highly subjective view
15 that promotes one employee or group of employees so that they enjoy
16 greater autonomy, opportunity, and empowerment over another
17 employee or group of employees. This is significant to the employees
18 who experience the negative consequences of a double standard, but it
19 is also significant to the organizational health of the agency, which as
20 we see in our FES scores has a significant impact on employee
21 engagement and, thus, the agency's ability to perform its mission.

22 NTEU continues to hear from employees who
23 experience double standards. When a double standard of behavior
24 affects our employees' working conditions, NTEU brings these to
25 management's attention. If outside the grievance process,
26 management generally responds by asking us if this is a specific

1 situation, or there are several employees involved. NTEU appreciates
2 this concern; however, while it is important to address the behaviors of
3 a supervisor who is impacting an entire branch, it is also just as
4 important when only one employee is involved who knows to borrow an
5 expression, that they can't win for losing. And despite the successes
6 of the Behavior Matters Program, or the Recitation of NRC Values in
7 various forms, many situations are not adequately addressed, and the
8 supervisor in question appears too often to continue to be unaware and,
9 therefore, unaccountable for their inappropriate behaviors.

10 Over the last year, NTEU worked with an employee
11 degraded and held accountable for alleged poor performance under
12 utterly abusive circumstances that occurred on a regular basis over a
13 length of time. That employee's supervisor continues to supervise.
14 NTEU worked with a male employee banned from the facility while his
15 case was pending for less egregious behavior than the alleged
16 behavior of a female employee in a supervisory position who was
17 transferred to another position while her case is pending.

18 NTEU has also observed for want of a better term
19 serial abusers who seem to look for vulnerable employees to bully and
20 actually have a reputation for doing so. If these supervisors are not
21 only not removed from supervisory positions, they continue to advance
22 in the organization.

23 Interestingly, though, NTEU has also worked with
24 several employees who had difficulties with a supervisor, who seemed
25 to single them out. When rotated from their supervisor to another area
26 of the agency, these employees went from a minimally satisfactory

1 performance to an excellent performance and truly engaged in their
2 work.

3 NTEU is aware that there can be difficult employees to
4 manage in any organization. However, we believe that the way these
5 situations are handled is what distinguishes a good supervisor from a
6 mediocre one. And we believe that supervisor aspiring to move ahead
7 in the agency look to their own management for signals as to what
8 behaviors are acceptable. This, in turn, reflects on the organizational
9 health of the agency, in general.

10 NTEU would hope that because everyone should be
11 treated with dignity and respect, the direct message to an offender from
12 their supervisor would be look at what I do. This is how I expect you to
13 conduct yourself in the workplace. And, of course, double standards
14 have an even more harmful effect on an organization when supervisors
15 apply a double standard to their own behaviors, when they say, in
16 effect, I expect this of you, but you can expect a very different this from
17 me. But, unfortunately, this is a surefire way of a supervisor to erode
18 their own credibility. But, unfortunately, not just their own credibility,
19 when employees see that this kind of double standard exists, it
20 heightens their awareness that they could also befall the very same
21 behaviors since apparently the agency either directly or tacitly
22 condones it.

23 In the previous EEO briefing in June 2015, the Office of
24 the Chief Human Capital Officer emphasized their commitment to build
25 individual readiness by stressing the importance of leadership at all
26 levels in order to build self-management and self-leadership skills.

1 This is important, and NTEU applauds these efforts, but training that it
2 aimed at empowering our employees simply does not negate the
3 important behaviors that our supervisors and upper level managers
4 must model for our employees, as well.

5 OCHCO stated at that time at the same EEO briefing
6 that they will continue to improve employee engagement by supporting
7 improvements in the workplace in response to the Federal Employee
8 Viewpoint Survey and other data gathering tools. Again, in the results
9 to 2015 test scores, responses to questions addressing confidence in
10 the leadership are very low. A culture that supports a double standard
11 of behaviors, a double standard of accountability, a double standard of
12 rewards, or a double standard of opportunities is a culture that cannot
13 be sustained. A culture that is marked by double standards destroys
14 trust, erodes confidence in leaders, and undermines the expectations of
15 a positive safety culture, which in turn undermines the ability of the NRC
16 to fulfill its mission.

17 Engaging in and perpetuating a double standard here
18 at the NRC must be challenged, and must be changed. This is
19 extremely important in the context of this EEO briefing, but equally
20 important in every aspect of our agency's organizational health. Thank
21 you very much.

22 CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thank you, Maria.

23 Well, I want to again thank each of the presenters for
24 their presentations today, and as well as thank our eight EEO Advisory
25 Committees and the newly formed Veterans Employee Resource
26 Group that are voluntary and work in partnership within the agency, and

1 SBCR, and with the offices to make NRC an even better place to work.

2 This has been a great overview of the programs and
3 policies we have in place. As I say, both policies and programs, but
4 also in terms of those other types of activities that I think can encourage
5 and increase our cohesiveness as an agency. And I want to thank you
6 all for that, and for the ideas and perspectives presented.

7 And one last comment I'll make. We've -- I think one
8 of the things we do is -- and I've heard a number of the presenters today
9 talk about the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, and what learnings
10 we can get from that. And I would remind everybody we're right now in
11 the middle of the Inspector General's Safety Culture and Climate
12 Survey. I think -- I spoke to the IG yesterday. We have about a 35
13 percent participation rate so far. I think that it's open at least about
14 another week, but I would encourage all of our staff to get their views in
15 there, take the survey, because it is something that we can use to better
16 the agency. So, if you haven't done it, get to it. Okay? And with that,
17 thanks very much.

18 (Whereupon, the proceedings went off the record at
19 11:14 a.m.)

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