

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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ALL EMPLOYEES MEETING

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WEDNESDAY

SEPTEMBER 6, 2017

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The All Employees Meeting was held in the Grand Ballroom of the Bethesda North Marriott & Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road, North Bethesda, Maryland, at 1:30 p.m., Kristine L. Svinicki, Commission Chair, presiding.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

KRISTINE L. SVINICKI, Chairman

JEFF BARAN, Commissioner

STEPHEN G. BURNS, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT

VICTOR McCREE, Executive Director for Operations

SHERYL BURROWS, National Treasury Employees Union

MIRIAM COHEN, Chief Human Capital Officer

SARA CULLER

PAUL HARRIS

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

1:30 p.m.

MR. McCREE: Well, good afternoon, everyone. I know we have a few more colleagues trickling over, but those of you who are here, please feel free to take your seats. Welcome to the annual NRC All Hands Meeting between the staff, NRC staff, and the Commission.

This is a public meeting, so I'd also like to welcome any members of the public and the media who might be present today. I'd like to thank you all for attending, particularly given the inclement weather that we're facing today.

And a special thanks to Chairman Svinicki and Commissioners Baran and Burns for taking time to meet with us and discuss topics that are of great interest to us all.

I recall participating in the first NRC All Hands Meeting 26 years ago in Bethesda at the Hyatt, and we continue to value this opportunity as much now as we did then. So on behalf of the staff, I want to thank the Commission for your continued support for this important event.

In addition to those of us here at headquarters, our colleagues in the regions and in the technical training center are also participating in this meeting via video broadcast, and our resident inspectors at the sites are receiving the audio of this meeting via telephone bridge.

The purpose of this meeting remains the same, to provide an opportunity for communications between the staff and the Commission, and for members of the Commission to share their perspectives on NRC's accomplishments and challenges.

The Chairman and each Commissioner will begin the

1 meeting with individual remarks, and the remainder of the meeting is reserved
2 for questions and answers. This is a unique opportunity for employees to
3 interact directly with the Commission regarding Agency policy and strategic
4 matters, so I encourage you to take advantage of it.

5 There are several microphones in the ballroom for your use
6 in asking questions, and we've also provide notecards on the chairs of each
7 seat in this space if you'd prefer to write your question. You can pass those
8 notes to one of the volunteer staff so that your question, along with those sent
9 in from the regions and other sites, can be read by our volunteers.

10 Also, if you have a cellphone or other electronic device, like
11 a pager if you're old school like me, please turn them off. Fred Brown knows
12 how to turn off his phone now. Fred knows what I'm talking about.

13 Meetings such as this would not be successful without the
14 work of many of our able volunteers, so today I'd like to recognize those here
15 with us today for their work. Helen Chang, if you'd raise your hand so we can
16 see you. Is Helen here? There, she's somewhere, there we go, Helen back
17 there. Thank you.

18 Paul Harris. Paul, thank you. Jazel Parks. Jazel, she's
19 in the building somewhere, all the way in the back. Jazel, thank you, I see
20 you. Thank you for the calisthenics.

21 Andrew Prinaris, thank you, Andrew, appreciate it. And
22 Sara Culler. Thank you, Sarah, we appreciate it.

23 Thank you also to our sign language interpreter and support
24 personnel from the offices of the Secretary, their Office of the Chief Human
25 Capital Officer, the Office of Administration, and the Chief Information Officer.
26 We sincerely appreciate your efforts to organize and provide technical and

1 logistical support for today's meeting.

2 Finally, I'd also like to recognize officials of the National
3 Treasury Employees Union who are here with us today. NTEU will have an
4 opportunity to address us near the conclusion of the meeting. It's now my
5 privilege to turn the meeting over to Chairman Kristine Svinicki. Chairman.

6 (Applause.)

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you, Victor, for those
8 opening remarks. Let me add my thanks to all of the individuals that he
9 recognized, and thank you to all of you for coming and showing up in the room
10 today. This is actually a great turnout. I was looking at the weather as I
11 prepared to exit the building, and I wasn't quite sure how many of you might
12 make the journey over.

13 Also, I want to acknowledge and thank those in the regions
14 and at the technical training center, and our resident inspectors at various site
15 locations who might tuning in to audio of the meeting. Thank you all for
16 participating today.

17 The inclement weather was also reminding me that I wanted
18 to just offer my personal gratitude and acknowledgment to our staff across the
19 Agency, but certainly in Region IV, who have been responding to the weather
20 event, Harvey in particular.

21 And also those staff across the Agency but in Region II who
22 will now be preparing the Agency to be in a state of readiness for Irma as it
23 approaches the U.S. So again, it's a reminder that we stand at the ready and
24 the important work that we do, and the fact that it's the things we are prepared
25 for and know about, but the things that come up and emerge.

26 And again, it's great confidence to me as chairman of this

1 agency, and I think hopefully to the nation as a whole that we have such
2 capable individuals who serve in this capacity. So thank you for what are
3 likely to be some long nights and weekends, and I'm very grateful for the
4 service that you give.

5 My brief opening remarks are just that, so in March I'll
6 celebrate ten years' anniversary here at NRC. And so I've participated in a
7 number of these meetings. I view this as a very, very valuable opportunity.

8 The Commission gets to speak its voice and project
9 outwardly to all of you and a lot of external stakeholders all the time. This a
10 chance for us to sit and take your questions and hear about what's on your
11 mind. And somebody, either here or in advance, submitted what will be the
12 most creative and interesting question of today's meetings.

13 So I know some individual is going to rise that occasion and
14 ask the question that makes us all kind of ponder. And as we go back to our
15 offices later, we'll be thinking about that question and talking about it. So it is
16 important that we be provoked in that way, to really step back and think about
17 the broader issues.

18 And some of them are just kind of condition of work, of fact
19 of life things that people are dealing with day to day. I like that this meeting,
20 in my experience, we get asked really high level policy and philosophical
21 questions.

22 We also get asked about really practical things that confront
23 people. And both of those are a part of your day-to-day work life and I think
24 are valuable. And so I don't mind the questions really, from soup to nuts. So
25 I look forward to it.

26 But before we get to that, I'm going to acknowledge the two

1 individuals here with me. And again, I've remarked previously but I again feel
2 very, very lucky to serve with such able fellow members of the Commission.
3 And we hope soon to be joined by more commissioners, so then we will have
4 our full complement.

5 But I congratulate Commissioner Baran on his soon-to-be
6 re-nomination, the paperwork to follow, as happened with me. But I
7 congratulate you on that and look forward to continuing to serve with you.
8 Please provide any opening remarks.

9 COMMISSIONER BARAN: All right. Well, thank you very
10 much. And thanks, everyone, for being here. I join the Chairman in
11 expressing my appreciation to all of you taking the time to join us in person or
12 from the regions, TTC, or resident offices.

13 This annual meeting is a great opportunity for you to share
14 your thoughts about how things are going at the Agency and ask the questions
15 you have on your mind.

16 This has been another year of significant change for NRC.
17 In a few weeks, the Agency will end the fiscal year with around 3200
18 employees. That's about the level we were at in 2006, when NRC was
19 starting to ramp up for the anticipated wave of new reactor applications.

20 In just two years, our workforce declined by more than 12%,
21 mostly as a result of the Project Aim efforts. That is a lot of change in a short
22 period of time, and I know that major changes can be challenging.
23 Unfortunately, for the first time in many years, NRC is preparing for a potential
24 reduction in force, affecting a number of corporate office positions.

25 I appreciate that the senior managers in OCHCO, SBCR,
26 and Admin are working hard with the employees who are in the affected

1 positions to try to identify open positions throughout the Agency that may be
2 a good fit for them. Progress has been made, but there is still work to do to
3 cope with the impacts of these corporate FTE reductions.

4 On the program side, the licensee's decision to stop
5 construction at the Summer site requires some big adjustments here as well.
6 Senior managers are focused on matching a few dozen highly trained
7 employees with other Agency work. A significant number of open positions
8 have been posted, and I am hopeful that everyone will find the right spot for
9 them.

10 Big changes can present new opportunities, but they can
11 also be very stressful, and uncertainty is never easy. If you're anxious about
12 particular issues or have specific questions, I hope you will share those with
13 us today.

14 Before I turn it over to Steve, I want to take just a minute to
15 acknowledge some of the important work happening at the Agency.

16 There are many significant efforts underway, including
17 oversight of licensee implementation of post-Fukushima safety
18 enhancements, the power reactor decommissioning rulemaking, the review of
19 the NuScale small modular reactor design application, surveys of non-military
20 sites with potential radium contamination, the docketing review of a license
21 application for a consolidated interim storage facility in New Mexico, and
22 efforts to prepare for potential advanced reactor applications.

23 Next month the Agency will also stand up the new Center of
24 Expertise for Rulemaking in NMSS. That is a lot of activity, and it is only a
25 small fraction of the work each of you are doing every day to support our vital
26 safety and security mission. So thank you for your hard work and dedication.

1 I look forward to hearing your thoughts and questions.

2 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you very much. We will
3 now turn to Commissioner Burns for any opening remarks.

4 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Just a few thoughts and
5 comments as we begin, because I think all of us want to hear the questions
6 and engage on that. But I want to echo the thanks expressed by my
7 colleagues for the performance of the staff during the past year.

8 There, as many of you know, I've been around here a long
9 time, except for my sabbatical a couple years ago. And throughout that
10 period, I can think of periods of time, of you know, high points, low points, you
11 know, just, you know, interesting flow of events.

12 It is very much sort of our history and our experience is very
13 much like a river, sometimes rushing fast, sometimes pooling, sometimes
14 flooding, sometimes maybe not as much water in it as you may want. But it's
15 always been an interesting experience for us, and I think it's something to hold
16 onto.

17 I think the important mission that the Agency has as
18 something that inspires us all in undertaking that work. But I want to thank
19 those of you in headquarters and those in the regions and the residents. I
20 know particularly, all of us will try to get out to sites and do sort of see in the
21 field what it is that we regulate.

22 And I know particularly having the insights when I go to the
23 regional offices or from their residents or other technical people from the
24 regions who accompany me on those visits, it's very important.

25 I do want to express my congratulations to Chairman
26 Svinicki on doing what seemed to be the impossible with respect to

1 nominations, is getting through and getting it done so we didn't have to face
2 the exercise of what do we do with less than a quorum.

3 We were fully prepared, we thought through it. All three of
4 us talked about it, we had support from the staff in thinking through. But I'm,
5 you know, my view is I'm glad we didn't get there.

6 And congratulations to Commissioner Baran for the pending
7 renomination. Just in case you're interested, I have no interest beyond June
8 30, 2019 for myself. But anyway, that's it. We'll see what goes on in the
9 coming couple years or so.

10 Again, I want to thank you all for being here today, for
11 listening in, and I'm ready to hear the questions and start to talk through some
12 of the issues on your mind and our minds.

13 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, thank you both for those
14 opening remarks. And so I think I will ask the question readers to begin. If
15 someone has one at the ready, to approach one of the microphones and
16 begin. We're still gathering questions.

17 This feels like a pledge drive or something, right. Asking
18 people, please, operators are standing by. Do we have a brave soul coming
19 to the microphone? Oh, okay, great, yes, on my right. No? Yes. Please
20 proceed.

21 READER: Hi, everyone. This is a quiet group. Hi, how
22 are you. In the past few years, Chairman Svinicki has talked about NRC 2.0.
23 Could you share your vision for upgrading the NRC to be a better regulator?

24 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Since I did use that terminology, I'll
25 begin, but if my colleagues have any general thoughts. To me, it's reflective
26 of the philosophy that all organizations need to continue to change and be

1 dynamic.

2 But I do share a view, my crystal ball's as good as anybody
3 else's, but I have a view that there feels like something uniquely dynamic about
4 the times we live in right now. And I share a view that for those of you here
5 now, you may have a really unique and open opportunity to make an imprint
6 on NRC.

7 And when you reflect on your time here, or if you retire from
8 NRC, you'll be able to say that was an exciting period where we were allowed
9 to think up and implement some changes and continue to evolve our
10 processes and our structures and our organization into what works.

11 I think about the days that I heard about when I came here,
12 like the creation of the reactor oversight process and other things. How
13 exciting that must have been for the people, I think that was 20 or 25 years
14 ago, who had an opportunity to be on a team and develop something.

15 And it looks a little bit different today because we've
16 continued to do assessments and evaluation of it. But I think that NRC today
17 and in the years that lies ahead has a chance for the same kind of innovation
18 and evolution in what we do, and just constantly adapting it to the outside
19 world as we find it. But continuing to return that value to the American public
20 through carrying out our missions.

21 We have as much, I'm confident, as much ingenuity and
22 creativity as people did 25 years ago working at NRC, some of whom are now
23 so accomplished that they sit in these first two rows here. But earlier in their
24 career, they got to be on those teams and work on processes and things like
25 that.

26 That's what NRC 2.0 means to me. And in your subject

1 matter area, it might look different.

2 But it's making, for the time you spend at NRC, however
3 long that is, it's that imprint and that contribution that you make to the
4 continuing evolution of who we are and what we do. I don't know if my
5 colleagues want to, not they don't want to own 2.0. Steve, do you want to
6 say anything?

7 COMMISSIONER BURNS: No, I would agree with you.
8 And as they say, thinking back of course over the course of a long career here,
9 I mean, some of the things are just things that happen and you adapt to. You
10 know, when I came here in 1978, there were no computers on the desks. You
11 know, how we communicate.

12 A couple weeks ago, I participated in this international
13 nuclear law program. And I was getting questions from somebody I think
14 from Somalia and a couple others, about, you know, how do you do this, that,
15 or the other.

16 Well, in the olden days, if you will, I would have had a way
17 to come back here, probably put together a handprinted file. But I could
18 answer their questions within about 24 hours, getting back through my staff,
19 who contacted. I said, here's some links where you can go look at how the
20 NRC does this, that, or the other.

21 So that's I think part of the dynamism. Not only how we,
22 you know, what it is that we're focused on in terms of regulation, but how we
23 do it, and how we do it more effectively. Because that's always I think the
24 challenge for us.

25 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Yes.

26 MR. FRUMKIN: Yeah, so my name's Dan Frumkin. I just,

1 we, about 13 minutes, we got straight to questions and answers. And I guess
2 I was looking for more on the state of the Agency, maybe some discussions
3 on that.

4 I mean, we're in a place where a dozen folks may be leaving
5 the Agency, what's it called, unvoluntarily in the next few months. That
6 seems like we must be in a pretty severe straights. That hasn't happened,
7 has it happened.

8 And then maybe more discussion on like, this is I think the
9 second time I've heard of NRC 2.0. It's not something I've read a lot about,
10 or maybe I've been out of touch. What does that mean, like what's the
11 physical, what does that physically constitute as a philosophy, is there
12 changes?

13 And then really, and that probably is the same as the vision
14 question. Where is the vision going in the future? There was a recent risk
15 meeting where the Commission asked, directed the staff to look at what was
16 going on internationally. Is that part of the future vision?

17 Where's the future vision going? International, internal
18 growth, process improvement, I mean these are, I guess it's kind of, I kind of
19 am looking for more of the foundation before I'm prepared to like ask other
20 questions. And these monitors are not in line with movement.

21 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, thank you for that. I think
22 there were a number of different elements there. NRC 2.0 is, I've given a,
23 there aren't writings on it. It's not a fully formed thesis. I can't remember
24 when I first mentioned it. I think that it was meant as kind of an expository
25 point on a broader discussion about something in a Commission meeting.

26 It does involve concepts of vision. I think that all of the

1 individual NRC contributors have an aspect of the vision moving us forward
2 that they're contributing to. I think we have moved to questions because we
3 do value the fact that we want to hear questions that people have.

4 Certainly, the movement towards risk-informed regulation is
5 long journey that NRC has been on, I think multi-decadal at this point. And
6 for me personally, that continued movement towards risk-informing and
7 continue to risk-inform our regulation and decision-making is certainly a part
8 of the NRC moving forward, as it has been the journey that NRC has been on.

9 The ongoing reduction in force process, I know that there
10 has been extensive communication to the offices that are impacted by that.
11 Commissioner Baran in his opening remarks talked about the efforts that have
12 been made, and my understanding are continuing to be made at this time, to
13 align the impacted individuals with positions.

14 And although that work continues and is ongoing, my
15 understanding is that will continue. Again, it is ongoing now but would
16 continue even during the period of notification of an actual involuntary
17 separation.

18 If we have more specific questions about that, I do know that
19 the chief human capital officer is more acquainted in the specific provisions of
20 the collective bargaining agreement. But it will allow for a sixty-day
21 notification to impacted employees and the efforts to continue to align the
22 impacted positions with existing open positions would continue even past that
23 notification.

24 So that was a lot. I mean, there were a lot of issues raised.
25 Do my colleagues want to address any of the vision or staffing or the future or
26 resources? It was a pretty broad basket.

1 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Well, one of the things, I think
2 one of the comments was with respect to the significance in particularly
3 looking at risk-informed regulation and approaches to regulation as our
4 engagement with the international community, and what that had.

5 And I think there, that is really a question, or it's not a
6 question, but it's really an issue of first, continued leadership by this country
7 with respect to nuclear regulation. I think that's important.

8 But second, there is a lot we have to learn, and there is a lot
9 we do cooperatively, through research, cooperative research agreements.
10 We actually leverage by being one of the contributors to research projects.
11 And where that France and the U.K., Japan, and maybe China, or others do,
12 that we do get, we leverage those kind of resources in terms of the types of
13 research results.

14 And that really, in looking at, if you look at sort of the history
15 of nuclear regulation, if you go back, to that is really one of the outcomes of
16 the Three Mile Island accident, or one of the positive outcomes is that more
17 sharing on operating experience and cooperation in those areas.

18 Because there is information about what happens at plant
19 in Switzerland, or in France may have some impact, may have insights to what
20 we do here. So I see that as a, you know, we have to be responsible about
21 how we use our resources and the like.

22 But I see that is, that's the nature of why we're still looking
23 in terms of internationally about how others might be approaching some of
24 these things. As well as, I'll sort of finish there again, is that continue to
25 provide a U.S. presence and U.S. leadership in some of those areas.

26 It is, you know, my experience when I worked at the NEA for

1 the OECD was that I was really surprised, as long as I had been involved in
2 this agency how much people were interested in how the NRC did it, why we
3 did it that way.

4 There is a certain amount of disagreement, there's a little
5 head knocking I think, can be, on terms of our approaches. But there is still
6 very deep interest in how we do things. And I think there is learning that we
7 can get.

8 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I just had a couple of points to
9 address kind of the question about how are some of these things that we're
10 seeing, this particular year, how does that fit into kind of the big picture of
11 where we are an agency and where we're moving.

12 And I think one of the key themes that we've had through
13 Project Aim and over the last few years is matching resources to work. At a
14 lot of, you know, the changes that we've seen over the last couple years really
15 are a result of that effort.

16 And so I mentioned a couple of things in terms of corporate
17 support and the Summer construction as being, I think the Summer
18 construction's a pretty good example of that, right. It was work that we had.
19 A lot of folks at the Agency were working on that, either full-time or a significant
20 part of their day or their time was spent on that.

21 That work goes away, and we need to shift folks to the work
22 that's still here. And I think one area where we're going to see a growth that
23 my colleagues talked about is more on the risk-informed licensing submittal
24 side. I think that's an area, it's not the only one, accident-tolerant fuel, other
25 areas where I think we may see offsetting increases.

26 But that's, I think, a key theme of what we've done or what

1 we are in the process of doing. And paired with that, increasing the overall
2 ability of the Agency to adapt to those shifting conditions. When we have
3 changes in workload, having folks be able to move more efficiently to address
4 the work that we have.

5 That starts bringing in strategic workforce planning, which I
6 think what is that going to mean in a concrete way for all of you.

7 What I'm hoping we're going to see in the next, you know,
8 period of time here, the coming months and years, is getting to a point where
9 it's going to be a real tool for all of you to think where do you want to go in your
10 career here. What are the skills you're going to need for a particular position
11 you're looking at.

12 And what are the training, a rotation or other opportunities
13 you're going to want to seek out to put yourself in a position to get the spot
14 that would be a good match for you.

15 So I'm hoping that there's going to be a real upside for that
16 effort. There's clearly benefits for the Agency overall, but I'm hoping you're
17 going to see the benefits more concretely to you individually as you're kind of
18 plotting your course over the years.

19 And I think, you know, I don't want to go on and on, but I
20 think in terms of you know, what are the challenges of all this for us. And
21 we'll probably talk more about this today. I think one of the challenges is
22 going to be making sure we have a pipeline of new talent coming into the
23 Agency.

24 We've had very limited hiring the last couple years. I think
25 that outside hiring is going to remain pretty targeted. But we're going to have
26 to get to a point where we have new talent coming into the Agency.

1 How do we retain the talent we have, all of you? I know
2 we're in a period where promotional opportunities aren't as plentiful as they
3 were at one time. We don't want to see folks leaving. And so this also kind
4 of goes back into really kind of plotting out where you want to get to and what
5 you need to do to get yourself in that position.

6 And then, you know, for folks who are leaving, we have had
7 a lot of folks take early outs and buyouts. The knowledge management piece
8 there, I mean that's just years, decades of experience and knowledge that we
9 need to make sure is getting passed down to the folks who are still here.
10 Because, you know, it's just irreplaceable, all that, those years of knowledge.

11 And so I think, you know, maybe we'll explore some of those
12 things in a little more detail today. But I think maybe a little bit more on the
13 big picture part of it.

14 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, I appreciate that. And in
15 addition to the areas of active attention that you just mentioned, I might add
16 one. Again, I agree with those you enumerated. But, you know, there's
17 occasionally talk or contemplation of changes to federal retirement systems.

18 Should that occur, depending on what those changes were,
19 that could really impact the decision-making of retirement-eligible employees
20 within the Agency. And then we would need, as you're mentioning, once
21 again to shift and adjust and accommodate that. And that might be
22 something we don't have a whole lot of notice or lead time on.

23 So I think we're going to have to maintain an ability to just
24 keep our eye on the various elements of how to have the human capital in the
25 strongest possible position in the Agency, but prepare ourselves for a range
26 of different, uncertain futures. And I think that that's as best we can do.

1 And I'm confident that at least the elements of that, maybe
2 we don't know entirely how it's going to turn out, but I think we are examining,
3 the leadership team here is constantly examining the range of outcomes and
4 keeping an eye on these very targeted external hires, other things.

5 I know that there are strong controls on that, but I think that
6 that also, as a result, gets a lot of high level management attention and thought
7 as a result of those controls being in place.

8 So I, you know, as I look at it, I don't see that there are areas
9 that are entirely off our radar screen. I think that we're doing the best we can
10 to be ready for a range of alternative futures. Is there another question?
11 Yes, thank you.

12 READER: I have two related questions from two different
13 staffers. The first one is: I have heard from some of my regional colleagues
14 that their managers have different requirements for those who work at home
15 versus those who don't.

16 OPM has stated that those who work at home must be
17 treated identically to those in the office. Thus, a supervisor can't ask a work-
18 at-home staff to email them in the morning when they are starting, or email
19 them weekly work tasks, unless they require that all their employees, even the
20 ones in the office, do this.

21 How does the Commission ensure that the OPM
22 requirements are properly implemented by the NRC leadership?

23 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I think I'm going to ask Victor, are
24 you or perhaps Miriam, the chief human capital officer, would you like to
25 respond with the specific requirements here?

26 MR. McCREE: It works. First of all, thanks to both

1 questioners. What I'd like to do is take that as an -- to give the most informed
2 and comprehensive response. Let's take that as an ask-the-EDO question,
3 and I'll respond by the first of next week.

4 READER: Okay, thank you. The second portion of that
5 question was: Can the Commission offer any insights on achieving
6 consistent and meaningful performance appraisals?

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Victor.

8 MR. McCREE: I'll take that and respond. By the end of
9 this week, thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER BURNS: I'll respond. I've been in the
11 position of being an office director and equivalent of a division director,
12 whatever. You know, it's, there are a lot of people involved in it. There's the
13 employee being evaluated, that employee's colleagues, the management
14 chain.

15 And I think at a high level, what I think you can say is I think
16 there has to be within an office discussion about ensuring consistency, or
17 consistency as an objective of having meaningful performance elements and
18 executing them fairly. And to the extent that an employee doesn't believe, it
19 has recourses to raise that through management, to use the assistance of the
20 union where they're able to do that.

21 What we try to do, I think you have to try to do, you have to
22 try to achieve a rough consistency. Because I think that's the best you can
23 ever do. But it starts with dedication by both employees and by management
24 to get there.

25 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have another
26 question?

1 READER: Other than regulation, what can the NRC do,
2 and what is it doing to solve the spent fuel storage problem?

3 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I think my view, other than carrying
4 out our safety and security mission related to the spent fuel, it is not the role
5 of this agency to have advocacy for particular policy outcomes. In the
6 strictest sense, that is the avenue in which we find ourselves.

7 I mean, as citizens, if individual NRC employees have other
8 views, that's certainly their right. But I know that as we sit before our
9 oversight committees of the Congress, there are a lot of questions directed at
10 members of this Commission that get to policy preferences and desired
11 outcomes.

12 And our answers are pretty boring and consistent, and they
13 are that we have the authority under law and we've put in the place the
14 regulations to maintain the safety and security of both wet and dry storage of
15 spent fuel.

16 And beyond that, we're not in general able to engage in
17 ways, and this is frustrating I know to some policymakers, but we don't engage
18 in the advocacy piece for particular outcomes.

19 I don't know if my colleagues want to add anything. We
20 continue to give a nice, boring answer, so. Do we have another question?
21 Yes, thank you.

22 READER: Could each Commissioner offer an account of a
23 work product or achievement from the staff that impressed them over the past
24 year.

25 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: That is a great question. And I
26 know as we're thinking, well I shouldn't speak for all of us, but I think what

1 we're trying to do is narrow it down. Because the quality of the work is high
2 here. We almost get a little bit spoiled, I think, in looking across the work
3 product that we get.

4 I'm going to, maybe this isn't really the best of the best, but
5 the first thing that springs to mind for me is, in joining this Commission, and
6 this might be true of others who are nominated to serve here on the
7 Commission, the adjudicatory role that Commissioners play is I think not the
8 thing that's first in mind.

9 We know that we will be presented with policy things. We
10 know that we will vote on a budget. These are the types of things we
11 contemplate. But the adjudicatory role is a uniqueness of this type of public
12 position on this Commission structure.

13 And over the course of time I have been so impressed with
14 that process, the quality of the participation of, before the board, the staff
15 witnesses, the OGC attorneys. Then if things are appealed and returned to
16 us in our appellate capacity as a Commission, the quality of support by the
17 Office of Commission Appellate Adjudication.

18 And just I think really the legal and technical excellence with
19 which draft decisions are prepared when we conduct our mandatory hearings
20 for combined license applications, just to see the staff present the testimony
21 that they give, the work product they prepare in advance of those mandatory
22 hearings. And again, the support from OGC, the Office of the Secretary,
23 OCAA.

24 I just, that has been something, it's really wonderful when
25 an important element of your job, you're just supported so well and so capably.
26 Because there are of course a lot of really tough issues that we have to dive

1 into with detail.

2 And I've just been grateful and impressed with the quality of
3 participating in the various hearings and adjudicatory processes. So I offer
4 that. There's many other good examples I could use, but I've been really
5 impressed with that in my time here.

6 COMMISSIONER BURNS: A couple things. It's hard to,
7 this is sort of like sometimes maybe talk about your children and not, making
8 sure, you know, you don't dis one unintentionally. I'll give just a couple
9 examples.

10 I think there's some, it's always interesting the myriad of
11 issues and things that have to come up to the Commission. And they're not
12 only the technical area or the legal area. You know, your administrative
13 issues and other things like that.

14 A couple examples I give. I think maybe I'll save the
15 mitigation of beyond design basis accidents -- I'm not supposed to call it
16 MBDBE. But I think because it represents in some ways a culmination of
17 what has been the journey over the five or six years post-Fukushima, and sort
18 of getting ourselves there. And I think that's a great effort.

19 The one other one I would pull out is the, and somewhat
20 different reasons maybe, is the non-military radium issue. And the reason
21 why is because I think that's a good example of where we had good
22 engagement between the staff and the Commission. I know I as a
23 Commissioner had some concerns about how the thing was going to unfold.

24 What I think the staff did is listen to some of those things
25 and really address them. And I think we've been having, you know from
26 talking to Marc and others in NMSS, I think we've, I've been very pleased with

1 how that's rolled out.

2 And I use that, again, that as an example, not because the
3 cut and dry what's in the four corners of the papers.

4 But it is, I think, one of those times where at its best, where
5 the Commission engages with the staff in terms of saying, Listen, we ought to
6 think about some of these things, or I'm concerned about how this goes in
7 terms of the communications with states and with others, local property
8 owners.

9 And the staff sort of responded. It still, you know, held true
10 to what ultimately is the important technical aspects of it. So I would hold that
11 out as one I think in the last year I've been very pleased with how it's gone.

12 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I agree with that. Actually as
13 I was sitting here kind of going through the list in my mind, I had those two on
14 my list as well. I mean, a little bit more broadly on post-Fukushima, the
15 rulemaking as Commissioner Burns pointed out, obviously represents a huge
16 amount of effort.

17 But there's also all the inspection activity going on, of all the
18 different enhancements. As we have moved more from kind of the
19 establishment of new regulatory requirements into the oversight of licensee
20 implementation, that inspection role is just so crucial. And a lot of really good
21 work is happening there, evaluation of seismic and flooding submittals. All
22 this work.

23 It's a great question. It is almost impossible to answer
24 because, you know, we could spend an hour and a half just cataloguing all the
25 things from the last year folks have done that are important. You know, when
26 I look at some of the things I mentioned, in my opening statement, I mentioned

1 the NuScale review.

2 And obviously that's been a huge amount of work. But
3 there's the APR1400 review, there's Clinch River, there's all the other work
4 that's going on there, all the effort that's gone into the advanced reactor side,
5 starting to think through what is it going to take to have a good, effective,
6 efficient framework for licensing non-lightwater reactors. A huge amount of
7 effort's gone on there in the last year or so.

8 The decommissioning reactor rulemaking that I've been
9 following very closely, all the work that has gone into the draft regulatory basis.
10 I'm sure now the evaluation of all the comments that came in on the draft reg
11 basis.

12 So, and I agree with Commissioner Burns that from my point
13 of view, the work that the staff has done to-date on the non-military radium
14 sites has been really positive. That's a tough issue to show up one day and
15 say, Hey, property owner X, you may have radium contamination, you know,
16 that's been here 100 years and you didn't know about it.

17 I think the staff's been handling that very well, making it a
18 priority to get out to those sites and really evaluate, at least in an initial survey,
19 what is, is there contamination at all. If so, what's the level of contamination,
20 and is it in an area where there's any exposure and those kinds of things.

21 So I think that is really a success story in the work that's
22 gone into that to date.

23 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have another
24 question? Yes, thank you.

25 MR. DINSMORE: Yeah, hi, my name's Steve Dinsmore.
26 I'm a risk analyst here. I guess we're always real careful to differentiate

1 between risk-informed and risk-based. DoE just came out with this big report.
2 I hope you know what it is, because I don't know the name.

3 But there's a bullet in that report that says that we should be
4 more risk-based. And I'm curious if you have an opinion or more information
5 whether when they say risk-based, they mean what we mean with risk-
6 informed, or they mean more quantitative.

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I am not certain if they recognized
8 a distinction between risk-informed and risk-based. I agree with you that I
9 think for those of us here in the NRC community, there's a very clear and
10 strong distinction between the two.

11 I'm not aware, I know that we did reach out within the Office
12 of the Executive Director for Operations to offer to provide, answer any
13 questions or provide information for that DoE study. To my knowledge, they
14 appreciated that but did not take us up on any of that.

15 So I think it's fair to say that the language that DoE used
16 was developed by them without really any kind of reaction from NRC or any
17 of our experts. So it's unclear to me if they drew that distinction or not.

18 COMMISSIONER BURNS: My experience too has been,
19 and from when I was general counsel, is that sort of the sensitivity that we
20 have about the use of risk-based versus risk-informed is often more in our
21 house. I mean, when we're talking each other.

22 I'll give you one other example. There's an organization
23 called the Administrative Conference of the United States, which basically
24 develops best practices in terms of government process and administrative
25 law.

26 And I remember being part of a review of a policy proposal

1 or a statement that they were doing, and it was, it came out risk-based. I
2 actually suggested they change it to risk-informed, which they did. And part
3 of it was I think the authors really didn't appreciate any particular distinction.

4 But when we were able to talk it through, they were able to
5 do it. They said, oh yeah, well, that's what we mean. So I haven't read the
6 DoE report as yet, so I don't really know. But I'm just giving, I give that
7 experience, sort of saying we're not always sure what they may actually have
8 in mind.

9 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have another
10 question? Yes, thank you.

11 READER: Despite the good intentions of implementing a
12 controlled resource reduction through Aim 2020, strong Congressional
13 influences caused the Commission to implement a staffing reduction across
14 the Agency.

15 As a result of becoming reactive, it appears that the
16 Commission used a sequestration approach to quickly reduce staff
17 everywhere, rather than reducing the staff in the areas where the workload
18 has been reduced, such as in NRO and high level waste.

19 The entire staff would like to know when will the Commission
20 establish the final target staff levels and when are the staff reductions going
21 to end. Also, when is NRO going to be combined into NRR?

22 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, I will begin an answer, and
23 there were a number of components to the question. I think that there's been
24 some reference made, it might have been Commission Baran, or maybe a
25 number of us up here have referred to the Strategic Workforce Planning next
26 iteration that is moving forward.

1 And there was some discussion about one of the outgrowths
2 of Project Aim was to improve our proficiency in matching the anticipated work
3 with the people, the capabilities, and skill sets that we have right now.

4 Some of that is people are immediately proficient and able
5 to do that. And in some cases, they may want to begin to look at individual
6 development plans and rotationals and other opportunities to position
7 themselves, as was mentioned, to align with anticipated work in the future.

8 But I think in terms of having overall targets, it will be an
9 outgrowth of the next, more high fidelity or detailed work at the Strategic
10 Workforce Planning Initiative that we have underway.

11 I would react to the question about a sequestration. I don't
12 quite characterize the actions of the Agency in that way. I know that we had
13 enhanced hiring controls that were put in place in advance of the government-
14 wide hiring freeze.

15 And by my observation from where I sit, that was actually
16 very advantageous to NRC that we were already in a position of having high
17 level controls on hiring. We did not have to do the kind of immediate and
18 severe reaction to that government-wide hiring freeze that other agencies had
19 to make a much more abrupt pivot. We were able to engage with the Office
20 of Management and Budget, explain to them the controls we had in place.

21 And as a result, I think we had the flexibility then to do very
22 limited things. I know in cases of specialized expertise or perhaps resident
23 inspector hirings that we needed to do, given the rotation policy there, and just
24 attrition that we experience on a natural basis.

25 So I think that we have what I would call a somewhat
26 sophisticated approach to what is a government-wide look at hiring controls.

1 And I think that what we've done is demonstrated the ability
2 to have the flexibility where it's critical, where's it's a critical skill set, where it's
3 needed, where we do need to bring in expertise for an emergent issue, like
4 accident-tolerant fuels has been used as an example.

5 I think that it's likely that we will, over the course of time,
6 need to look at the things that Commissioner Baran was identifying. Are we
7 making enough entry-level hires to be able to have the right kind of pipelines
8 for the future?

9 If we look at, we've got a lot of retirement-eligible individuals
10 in the Agency who stay. They choose to continue to work here, but if their
11 circumstances changed or there were other changes to retirement systems
12 that might be a quick impact that we have to deal with.

13 So I think, I'm actually quite proud, I think, of the way that
14 NRC has approached this particular hiring and staffing environment. And I
15 think the fact that we kind of got ahead of having a knowledge base of how
16 our work was shifting, what people we needed.

17 And we began -- now the strategic workforce planning is not
18 perfect. That is why it is undergoing another evolution, an iteration where
19 we're looking at some of the competency modeling and the other skill sets that
20 we're going to need for the future.

21 But I think if were compared across government agencies,
22 it's a fairly sophisticated and I think a systematic approach that's going to, has
23 served us well when there was, you know, an immediate change in
24 government policy and will continue to stand us in good stead for the future.

25 It won't be perfect because we just, we don't know where all
26 of the bands of uncertainty are going to land for -- as a matter of we approach

1 October 1, which is the end of the fiscal year, we don't know with finality our
2 funding for just a few weeks from now.

3 And I will just say on that point, in anticipation of the next
4 question, we do, as we approach the end of the fiscal year, look very carefully
5 at what amount of carryover funds we will have.

6 In years past when there's been very late-breaking
7 continuing funding resolutions, we've been able to have enough carryover to
8 be able to tell employees in advance that yes, we will keep operating for a
9 week or two weeks.

10 And it's my understanding that we, although we don't have
11 a final cost estimate of how much carryover we would have, we anticipate we
12 would be able to give employees advance notice of that, again, as we
13 approach the end of September. I don't know if my colleagues want to add.

14 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Well, I agree with the
15 Chairman that Project Aim has been more systematic than the question
16 suggests. It's been focused on matching resources to specific areas of work.
17 You know, rather than taking a sequestration type approach of saying, every
18 office should achieve a reduction of X percentage or something.

19 Instead, there was the re-baselining process that went
20 through a systematic process for determining what is the specific work that
21 could be de-prioritized or done with fewer resources. And so I think that's a
22 very different approach than the question suggests was taken.

23 Because the goal has been to match resources to work, I
24 don't envision a target staffing level, because staffing and resources need to
25 depend on the amount of work the Agency has before it, and that's going to
26 shift, you know, over time. So I don't see coming up with a particular target

1 for a year in the future.

2 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Steve, do you --

3 COMMISSIONER BURNS: I agree with what my
4 colleagues said. And I sort of end it by emphasizing again I think Project Aim
5 and the efforts that the staff and the Commission did through it put us in a
6 better position in terms of arguing for our proposed budget.

7 Because we basically had said, the information said, "Here,
8 we've looked at this issue." This is where we think we can achieve savings.
9 This is where we think the work is going to be. This is how we can work
10 effectively.

11 And I think that put us in good stead in terms of with our both
12 oversight and appropriations people in terms of doing what they should do.
13 This is push back at the Agency in terms of saying, well, why do you need
14 these kinds of resources. I think it helped us give those answers.

15 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have another
16 question? Yes, thank you.

17 READER: Yes, I have two related questions from two
18 staffers. The first is: Given the president's stand on no new regulation does
19 not affect the NRC, why does it seem that new rulemaking and other high level
20 documents seem to be held up by the Commissioners?

21 The second question is similar. Are there any policy
22 decisions currently in front of the Commission being postponed until the NRC
23 has a full Commission?

24 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you for that question. The
25 mention of the president's stand on rulemaking I think is in relation to a series
26 of executive orders that were issued early in his presidency. Again, the Office

1 of General Counsel looked very systematically at those.

2 Although sometimes within the four corners of the order
3 itself it wasn't always clear the application of the particular order to NRC, there
4 was generally follow-up guidance that came out of the Office of Management
5 and Budget to the extent it wasn't clear, it eventually became clear in
6 subsequent guidance.

7 So the Agency was able to look at those one by one and
8 issue determinations about which did apply. For instance, the government-
9 wide hiring freeze was determined to apply. But there were other executive
10 orders such as, I think like the rescission of two rules for one and things like
11 that that do not apply to the NRC as an independent agency.

12 Rulemaking on the Commission's docket, particularly final
13 rules, can be a very, very rich record of information to look at in order to move
14 forward. Again, I mentioned I have nearly ten years of service on this
15 Commission. I've served under a number of chairmen, and also with a
16 number of different Commissioners.

17 Part of our collegial functioning as a deliberative body of
18 three at the moment but five at full strength, of five decision makers is that on
19 a particular matter, it may be that one of us says, Oh, I've got a lot of
20 knowledge of this, or I've been here, or I have some subject matter expertise.
21 This is very straightforward to me.

22 Another member of the Commission may say, this isn't
23 really an area that I'm comfortable. I need more time. I'm going to spend
24 time working on this matter. And so there is a collegial give and take that I
25 think in general we try to respect. If someone else wants to ask additional
26 questions or receive additional briefings.

1 Rulemaking is the quasi-legislative function that we have.
2 And I think I've remarked in the past but I'll remark again, it's a very, very sober
3 authority that we carry as members of this Commission. Because when a
4 final rule is put in place, it's given us a somewhat legislative authority to compel
5 actions of individuals or organizations.

6 And so the notion of taking the care to get that right is
7 something, I'll speak only for myself, but I think in general members of a
8 Commission such as our feel that there is a certain accountability when you
9 sign your name to approve such a thing that you have secured for yourself
10 enough of an understanding that the rule is effective, that it's understandable,
11 that it will not have unintended consequences. And in my time here, that
12 takes varying amounts of time to do.

13 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I would just say, you know, I
14 think part of the question was getting at, you know, is there some aversion to
15 rulemaking on a Commission. From my own point of view, there isn't. I
16 think, you know, when a rule makes sense, I don't have any blanket aversion
17 to rulemaking.

18 And I hope that's, you know, something that is not an
19 impression that folks are left with. I mean, if the staff thinks that the right
20 solution to any particular regulatory issue is, you know, a rulemaking
21 approach, from my point of view, I want to hear the best technical regulatory
22 view of the staff.

23 I don't want you guys to self-censor, I don't want you to hold
24 back if you think rulemaking on something is the right way to go.

25 So please give us, you know, we typically get options, and
26 that's very helpful to us as decision makers. But if you think one of those

1 options should be a rule on something, or the recommended option should be
2 a rule, I hope you'll, you know, make that recommendation or have that in the
3 paper.

4 In terms of waiting for five, it's not my impression that that's
5 been happening. We, I think right now, we just, Part 35 just went out recently.
6 I think we're getting close on another rulemaking matter. I think of the maybe
7 five we now have pending before the Commission, at least, I mean I voted all
8 of them.

9 So I'm not waiting for additional Commissioners to show up,
10 and I don't get the sense anyone else is either. But as the chairman points
11 out, everyone kind of votes things at their own pace. And that's not folks
12 waiting around for additional members to show up, I don't think.

13 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I had not picked up on the part of
14 the question, I appreciate if you identified that there was some part of the
15 question that was, that rulemaking is somehow a disfavored option. I just
16 want to second that that is not my view at all.

17 And as a matter of fact, rulemaking in some instances is the
18 necessary instrument. I mean, I know that there are always orders. But the
19 most, I think, systematic way for us to enshrine an enduring requirement is as
20 an enduring regulation. And that I think has the greatest record around it, the
21 greatest involvement of stakeholders in commenting.

22 And so I think that rulemaking is, the purposes for which it
23 is intended, it is the strongest instrument, meaning it's the most rigorous and
24 I think the most thorough way for us to go about promulgating or putting
25 forward something that we think has that kind of applicability.

26 All right, thank you. Do we have another question?

1 READER: What is happening with the leadership model
2 initiative? Is it a go or a no?

3 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I might ask the executive director
4 for Operations. I know that the Commission has engaged with the EDO and
5 with the staff on this, but I'll let Victor respond.

6 MR. McCREE: Thanks for that, great question. We did
7 move a paper forward to the Commission on crafting, recommending the
8 creation of an explicit leadership model for NRC. The Commission did vote
9 on that paper and indicate that it was a prerogative, if you would, of the EDO
10 and the staff to move forward on that.

11 So we're in the formative states of building, coalescing a
12 team that will assemble what we believe will be a very worthwhile model to
13 define what we mean in the NRC by leadership. Which all of us are, we're all
14 leaders.

15 So we're going to articulate that and share it. We'll have
16 focus groups to pull together folks who understand and believe in leadership,
17 and what a leadership model looks like. So if you want to volunteer, please
18 raise your hand. But we'll start to work on that soon, so thanks for that
19 question.

20 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have the next
21 question?

22 READER: This is a question regarding staffing. Some
23 operating reactors have shut down and others may follow due to economic
24 pressure. Construction is halted at Summer. Vogtle continues, but the
25 future is somewhat uncertain.

26 It seems clear Agency staffing will continue to decrease. It

1 is not clear that normal attrition can match likely workload reduction. Are
2 there future RIFs being planned or currently envisioned in response to the
3 unfair role of conditions for nuclear power plants?

4 And the follow-up question is: If Vogtle AP1000 project is
5 cancelled, what will NRC's staffing level looking like?

6 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you for that question. And
7 there's a general question there, but there are some specific items of work that
8 are also being asked about.

9 We have discussed in the responses to the questions thus
10 far that, in the instance of the Summer project, those were -- that was work
11 that we expected to be before the Agency. The project is cancelled, so efforts
12 are ongoing to look at positions where those same skill sets of those
13 individuals might align.

14 There are solicitations of interest that will go out. Some of
15 them will have rather quick turnaround windows, so I do encourage those
16 impacted by the Summer project cancellation to keep an eye on those
17 solicitations of interest.

18 If the Vogtle project, although the constructor indicated a
19 design to continue with the project, that does pend before the Georgia Public
20 Service Commission, so I agree with the questioner that there is uncertainty
21 and I think will continue to be, at least through the end of the year, regarding
22 that.

23 If that project were to be impacted and terminated similarly,
24 I think that we would engage in the same kind of exercise that we currently
25 are conducting with regard to the cancellation of the Summer projects.

26 Our budgeting and planning for reactors that have already

1 announced their premature cessation of operations before the end of their
2 license, we are accommodating that in budget and strategic workforce
3 planning space.

4 Further shutdowns, that's a little bit harder to do, it gets into
5 that realm that we've been talking about of uncertainty, and I think it would be
6 hard for us, with particularity, to really incorporate additional premature reactor
7 shutdowns.

8 Certainly, we can have our eye on the horizon and over the
9 horizon for -- we monitor, as I'm sure you all do, I read in the press clippings
10 about units that have indicated to their governors or their utility commissions
11 that they are operating at a loss.

12 There are instances where operators in the United States
13 are seeking, with state legislatures or with utility commissions, some sort of
14 support for other market mechanisms that might cause the continued
15 operation of their units to be economic, whereas, right now, they assess that
16 it may not be economic over the -- going forward.

17 On the more global issue, these are, certainly, adjustments
18 and changes to our work scope that we thought would be before the Agency,
19 but for an Agency of our size, I think Summer was in the neighborhood of 35
20 Agency-wide positions impacted.

21 These are things -- maybe I'm a bit more optimistic, I don't
22 think I'm unrealistically optimistic, but I might be a little bit more optimistic than
23 the questioner that, if we have occasional instances where 30-50 positions are
24 impacted, we do have natural attrition that is always going on within the
25 Agency and so, while, again, strong efforts have to be made to find opportunity
26 for individuals whose positions are impacted by a project termination, I think

1 we've been able to lean into that.

2 And, in some instances -- when the Summer decision was
3 announced, the Agency -- I was informed, I think the next day that the Agency
4 was putting a pause on transfers that were going on or any other personnel
5 actions in hiring.

6 And I was pleased to hear that the Agency leadership was
7 that quick to say, well, let's pause to make sure that we're not creating things
8 that are artificially disadvantageous to those employees who have been
9 assigned to the Summer project.

10 So, I think that we try, with fairness, to use the tools that are
11 available to us immediately to help to have some adjustment. And we have
12 such -- Human Resource here, the people of NRC really are our greatest
13 investment and it's a significant loss if a project is terminated and we lose
14 people that have had ten years of development here.

15 So, if we can match them to something for which they are
16 capable, then that is just to the benefit of the entire organization. And so, we
17 don't necessarily make these efforts just for the employee, it's for the strength
18 of the organization.

19 And that's what gives me confidence that, as we continue to
20 see changes in the industry that we regulate, that we'll make those changes.

21 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I agree. And the only thing I
22 would, and you mentioned this specifically, but I would just reiterate it is, if
23 you're someone who was working on the Summer project, if you're one of
24 those 35 affected employees, be proactive.

25 Look at those solicitations of interest, a bunch of them went
26 out, more are going to come out, don't be passive about that, look and see,

1 what do you think would be a good match for your skill set or your interests,
2 and apply for as many of them as you're interested in.

3 And make sure you find a spot that's going to be good for
4 you, because as the Chairman mentioned, there are a lot of openings within
5 the Agency and represented in those solicitations and some solicitations
6 coming.

7 But in the end, the person who needs to find that next spot
8 for you is you. And so, go out there and really look hard and apply where you
9 think it makes sense.

10 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have the next
11 question?

12 READER: What regulatory or organizational improvements
13 would you most like to see implemented to improve safety, security, or the
14 NRC's efficiency in carrying out its mission?

15 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I think, at a first blush, the types of
16 things that I would like to see NRC doing, it has underway. I think that the
17 next evolution of strategic workforce planning and the competency modeling
18 is a very, very important investment in just kind of having the right kind of high
19 fidelity resource planning on the human capital side that we need.

20 I think that we are moving towards, not having a Project AIM
21 going on forever, but taking some of those continuous improvement and
22 evaluation mindsets and incorporating them into the way we go about doing
23 business.

24 And also, process improvement initiatives and things like
25 that that might have had a little bit more focus during Project AIM, but I think
26 are part of the NRC culture, they were before Project AIM and I think that they

1 are really inculcated into the organizational mindset.

2 And I think that gets back to the notion that NRC wasn't -- it
3 looked differently 25 years ago, it will look different 25 years from now. And
4 it is that willingness to be -- I know some people don't like the term continuous
5 learning culture, but I do think that that is part of the NRC that I joined ten
6 years ago and I see that continued on today.

7 COMMISSIONER BARAN: This is another one of those
8 questions it's hard to answer, because there are a lot of priorities that come to
9 mind. I would put the decommissioning rulemaking high on my list.

10 In my view, the approach we have now of regulation by
11 exemption isn't efficient for anyone. It's not efficient for licensees, it's not
12 efficient for us.

13 And I think it's very important for the Agency to take a fresh
14 look at a range of these decommissioning issues that are getting so much
15 attention all across the country, and do that with an open mind.

16 COMMISSIONER BURNS: I think, to probably echo what
17 both my colleagues said, as the Chairman said, I think in terms as an
18 organization, there is a need for us to continually reevaluate where we are
19 with certain initiatives.

20 Did certain initiatives pan out? Are there adjustments we
21 need to make? This is sometimes, as I mentioned in an earlier answer,
22 sometimes it's driven by what technology allows us to do or may, in some
23 cases, prevent us from doing, in terms of how we carry out organizational or
24 try to achieve organizational effectiveness.

25 I think in the other area, it's been mentioned before, I think
26 one of the things, which is trying to look down the road a little bit, and I know

1 it's hard, but I know there's been work doing it in NRO, this is with respect to,
2 if there is a serious focus on advance reactor designs, the efforts that NRO
3 has tried to establish through the vision, but also the strategies, both near-
4 term and longer term, which may require some regulatory adjustments.

5 We've done that, the work, in part looking at the report that
6 was partly sponsored by the Department of Energy with respect to dealing
7 with the general design criteria.

8 They go back -- as many of you know, the GDC, the origins
9 of the GDC are more around 1970. They've served us well, but they may not
10 -- they may have gaps, they may have excesses with respect to how you look
11 at establishing the standards and the criteria for advance reactors.

12 So, that's an area, again, where I think we need to be
13 conscious of and we need to spend some time on and be conscious of over
14 the next few years, as we go forward.

15 And one of the things I, again, would credit the staff with
16 doing the workshops that were conducted over the last year on advance
17 reactors, but really, now, putting it into a periodic or systemic and periodic
18 meeting with those who are interested in that area, I think will put us in good
19 stead.

20 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have the next
21 question?

22 READER: I have two related questions regarding NRC's
23 safety culture. First question will run into the second question. The Union
24 of Concerned Scientists recently stated that the NRC is skilled at helping
25 licensees ensure that they have a healthy safety culture, but has not been
26 successful in establishing their own healthy safety culture.

1 Why hasn't the Commission established a safety culture
2 policy statement for the NRC? The related question is, what are the two
3 changes that you believe would allow the NRC to make the biggest differences
4 for improving NRC safety culture?

5 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I'm going to put the Executive
6 Director for Operations on notice that I would like him to address the -- I know
7 that we do have action plans that we develop after the survey results are
8 received for the Agency and I know organizations look at their organizational
9 results on some of the culture surveys for the Agency.

10 Regarding the Commission establishment of a safety
11 culture policy statement for the Agency, I've not taken that up or been
12 supportive of that. I would have to share the view of the Union of Concerned
13 Scientists that we have a significantly eroded safety culture.

14 I, again, am approaching ten years of working here and I
15 simply don't share that observation about the health of the NRC's own safety
16 culture. I -- so, that's on the Commission establishment of a policy statement.

17 And I will let my colleagues respond, Victor, could you just
18 address generally though, before my colleagues speak to the question?

19 MR. MCCREE: Thank you, Chairman. I of course echo the
20 Chairman observation about the NRC safety culture. I do believe we have a
21 strong safety culture, but there are areas that we can improve upon.

22 And, in fact, our focus following the 2016 Federal Employee
23 Viewpoint Survey and OIG Safety Culture and Climate Survey is that we
24 needed to focus on strengthening our trust. And we identified three
25 initiatives.

26 The first was, strengthening a positive environment for

1 employees to raise concerns. To strengthen ourselves in the area of
2 engendering trust. And increasing the accountability or strengthening
3 perceptions of increased accountability among leaders. And that's all of us.

4 We've made strides in that area. We've gotten some
5 preliminary feedback on surveys on this year and that there's an upward
6 vector. You'll hear more about that in the coming months. But I believe
7 we're on a positive track.

8 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Would other of my
9 colleagues like to respond?

10 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I'll just take the opportunity to
11 reiterate how important it is for everyone at NRC to feel comfortable raising
12 safety concerns and for supervisors and managers to treat those concerns
13 seriously. A strong safety culture is really essential to our work here at NRC.

14 And I think, in my time here, I've found in our -- and the
15 papers that have come before us, when we've had nonoccurrences, when
16 we've had differing professional opinions, those have been super helpful in
17 evaluating the issues around some of these tough policy issues.

18 So, for some of those who have used that process, thank
19 you, it really does help decision makers. And for those of you who have
20 thought about using it, but for whatever reason, didn't, if you have a concern
21 or you have a view that is a differing view, please express it.

22 More and more, the staff is sending up papers that reflect
23 any differences of opinion among the staff built right into the paper and the
24 different views are clearly stated and presented. And I think that's very useful
25 and I would encourage the staff to continue that practice.

26 We -- as I mentioned earlier, we want the staff's best

1 technical regulatory analysis. And if there are differing views among the staff,
2 we want to understand those, because that really helps us in our deliberations.

3 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Just a couple reflections. I -- in
5 terms of an absence of an internal Agency safety culture statement, I don't
6 see the particular need for one, because in many respects, I think those -- the
7 statements that we have adopted as an Agency or as a staff, whether through
8 the principles of good regulation or the organizational value, address the types
9 of things that you want to get at in terms of an organizational culture and a
10 good culture organizationally.

11 One of the other things -- there are other things we can rely
12 on. I know the NEA did, a few years ago, in terms of, again, this is sort of
13 cross-fertilization in terms of the international sphere, one of what they call
14 their green books on the organizational culture or the safety culture of the
15 regulator itself. And I think that's something we can use.

16 Again, as I think, as my colleagues and as Vic has said, I
17 think sometimes what this is looking at the results. The surveys are very -
18 - can be very useful and they help us, I think, to focus in areas in the
19 organization where perhaps we need to be better about how we talk to people,
20 how we engage people, how they engage with their colleagues, in terms of
21 looking at the issues.

22 And those are not always -- this is one of the things, just as
23 an aside, this was one of the -- in the early days of the IG safety culture,
24 whatever we call it, it's a Safety Culture and Climate Survey, I remember in
25 OGC, there was, on some of the questions, there was sort of a blank, a very
26 odd response, is because we in the legal offices, we didn't look at that as a

1 safety culture issues.

2 But there certainly are organizational culture, can you, within
3 the Office of the General Counsel, raise issues about, I think that the legal,
4 proper legal opinion is this, or the proper analysis is this, or we should be
5 looking down those things?

6 So, from my standpoint, the biggest issue for this Agency
7 always is, in effect, what some will always call the marketplace of ideas, and
8 that is, the ability to express ideas, to have them laid out.

9 But there's also an understanding that at some point,
10 somebody's got to make a decision. And we have to do that in a respectful
11 way, we have to do that in a way that accommodates real concerns that are
12 raised, that help shape suggestions or recommendations on policy, the best
13 way we can.

14 But those are the types of things that we have to do. So, I
15 think focusing on that and I think the types of things Vic mentioned here is
16 probably more important for us than trying to craft yet another document, when
17 we have it there, we know -- we kind of feel what it is. I think we can get there
18 by that continued attention.

19 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have the next
20 question?

21 READER: Two questions regarding new staff. There is an
22 NRC job fair scheduled in the new fiscal year. Why is the Agency
23 contemplating this effort during a reduction in force? Follow-up question is,
24 what is the NRC doing right now to retain their new employees?

25 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I think to the extent that -- I wasn't
26 aware of the job fair. I'm going to ask either the EDO or the Chief Human

1 Capital Officer to respond on these specifics. And the second part was
2 retention of new or entry-level employees.

3 MS. COHEN: So, we have a scaled-down recruitment effort
4 in the fall. We used to go to many, many colleges and universities and that's
5 been significantly scaled down.

6 The questions that the Commission has already answered
7 in terms of keeping an eye on entry-level hiring, we do want to have
8 relationships with certain schools, we don't want to lose the pipeline for when
9 we do actually start hiring again. But it is a minimalist effort at this point. So,
10 just for the clarification.

11 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. And I would -- I don't
12 know if we -- just I think overall retention of new employees, I think it is
13 available for them to develop individual development plans and other -- seek
14 other opportunities. There's rotational assignments that are available. I
15 don't know, Miriam, if you'd like to --

16 MS. COHEN: Yes, and one of the things that we hear in the
17 interagency community when we go speak about what happens at the NRC,
18 other agencies are actually quite impressed with our rotational program. A
19 lot of agencies do not offer that.

20 So, the fact that we, while we are in a resource constrained
21 environment, that we do actually support rotations and allow people to move
22 on to other opportunities in another office, provided that the office can afford
23 to let that person go at that particular time, is something that I think we will
24 continue to do, now and into the future.

25 And I think the focus on the individual development plan is
26 important and I think it goes along with looking at the solicitations that are

1 coming due, looking at where the Agency may be hiring in the future, and
2 tailoring people's development efforts to that, because people may need to
3 take more moves laterally now to get more experience than maybe they would
4 have had to in years past, but it's going to enable people to have broader
5 exposure, more experience, and will make them more marketable for the
6 positions that will exist in the future.

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. Do we have the next
8 question?

9 READER: Is the NRC seen as archaic, standing in the way
10 of progress, on Capitol Hill?

11 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, there are 535 members of
12 Congress, so I'm sure that if we began to canvas them, we could find any
13 number of perspectives on the NRC.

14 But I'll react by just saying, in the whole, or in the main, I
15 encounter that, to the extent that there is awareness of NRC, and I'm not going
16 to pretend that every member of Congress immediately doesn't think of that
17 as the National Research Council or something else, if they have any acronym
18 --

19 (Laughter.)

20 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: -- but I have found a broad middle
21 that has respect for who we are and what we do here.

22 I think, again, that is a reputation earned by all of you and
23 the work you do, that isn't -- I know that they see a lot of the members of the
24 Commission, but in general, there is respect for the NRC staff as being very,
25 very capable, very proficient, disciplined in what they do.

26 And I think that there's a respect for that, that we're guided

1 by the facts and look at issues systematically and are careful in what we put
2 forward, realizing the impact and effect of what we do.

3 And I encounter that, in some cases, is it kind of a grudging
4 or reluctant admission that we're good at what we do and effective in our
5 mission? Sure, but in other -- I think even to have that is something very
6 important, that all of you and the Agency have earned.

7 The question used some specific terms, it said archaic,
8 there is a probing with NRC right now with members of Congress to say, as
9 technology changes, as truly advanced reactors might be developed in this
10 country, they're probing us to see if we're ready. Do they need to pass new
11 laws in order to enable us to do that?

12 And we've indicated that we have the tools available and we
13 have the authorities under law. What we might not have, as I think that
14 Commissioner Burns mentioned, is we might not have regulations on the shelf
15 that are immediately reflective of licensing those truly advanced or new
16 technologies in the most efficient way.

17 But as we engage with vendors now, in pre-application
18 space, I think we are exhibiting the flexibility to say, we can take what we have,
19 the framework we have, and adapt it.

20 And if this became a body of work that was large or routine
21 for the Agency, we might be in the position, as Commissioner Baran talked
22 about with decommissioning, we want to have something truly adapted to that
23 circumstance, because that's a more efficient way to review something and
24 license it.

25 So, where those terms are used, I don't think it's a broad
26 brush criticism of the Agency's posture as a whole. I think it's a concern that

1 maybe we might confront something that we're not ready for.

2 And I think it's fair for them to ask that question, I'm not really
3 hearing that as an accusation that we wouldn't want or we'd be resistant to it
4 or somehow set in our ways.

5 I think their view is, they do review our budget and they vote
6 on that, so if we needed something simple that would allow us to be positioned
7 for success on that, sometimes they get frustrated, saying, just tell us what it
8 is and some of us would be inclined to make sure that you have it.

9 So, the answer, I guess, is once again, a little too boring,
10 that we think we could handle it if it emerged. And if it looks like something
11 that we're going to do even quasi-routinely, we would try to have a ready-
12 made process in place. I don't know if my colleagues want to add anything.

13 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I think that was a really good
14 response. I don't know that I have too much to add. I think the only other
15 data point I would add to that is, if I just think of the last few Congressional
16 oversight hearings we've been to, I think the interactions have been very
17 positive.

18 And with, as the Chairman mentioned, the possible
19 exception of advanced reactors, where I have heard members of Congress
20 say, you really need to make sure you have a framework for licensing that
21 would work for non-light water reactors, which I think is right. I haven't heard
22 the kind of statements asked about in the question.

23 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Okay. Do we have the next
24 question?

25 READER: I have a number of questions regarding the
26 Commissioners and NRC senior executives. So, let me read the questions

1 very slowly. Will five Commissioners be more productive than three?

2 (Laughter.)

3 READER: What is the status of the two vacant
4 Commissioner positions? Can you please tell me when a decision will be
5 made for the permanent Office Director position in New Reactors? And when
6 will NRR have a permanent Director? Would you like me to repeat those?

7 (Laughter.)

8 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: No.

9 (Laughter.)

10 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Okay. Should we maybe just do
11 this kind of lightning round? So, I wrote them --

12 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Sure.

13 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: -- down, hopefully captured them
14 correctly. So, the first one was, is five Commissioners more efficient than
15 three? I think it --

16 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I'm glad you weren't asking me
17 that, you were looking --

18 (Laughter.)

19 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I want to hear what you say.

20 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, I mean, some of this is
21 common sense, right? Okay. So, if there's three people that have to act in
22 order to arrive at a decision, that's fewer than five, so in theory that could be
23 faster.

24 I think what's lost there, though, I think I've heard all three of
25 us here at this table give some variation on this response at some point
26 though, which is that the reason that Congress established five is that you

1 want to get different perspectives and diversity of views on these questions.

2 So, three might be faster sometimes, maybe not other times,
3 I mentioned that we operate very collegially, so if someone wants time to do
4 something, we generally allow that to each other, because we might be the
5 person who wants the extra time next time. So, we do operate that way.

6 But the question would be, what is lost by not having five?
7 And the truth is, when you don't have five, you don't know if someone would
8 have a good question.

9 It's interesting, I remember being at a Congressional
10 hearing with a former Commissioner Magwood and I don't remember how the
11 question was asked of us, but his answer was, he wanted to tell a story about
12 he had already voted a matter, I voted it and raised some new perspective on
13 the issue, and I don't just say this because it was about my vote, but he
14 actually recast his vote in the opposite direction, finding that a colleague had
15 unearthed something that, upon his examination of it, was important enough
16 that he changed his mind.

17 And I know it's shocking that in Washington there was an
18 example of someone saying, hey, I was wrong about that, you make a good
19 point, I'm going to change my mind about it. It's not something that we hear
20 every day, but that does happen here.

21 So, when we don't have five, when we have two vacancies,
22 there might be somebody who would say, wait a second, you didn't ask this
23 question. And there is something important that we forgo there.

24 I don't -- if my colleagues want to respond. You didn't want
25 to answer it earlier.

26 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I thought that was a really great

1 response.

2 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Okay.

3 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I agree.

4 (Laughter.)

5 COMMISSIONER BURNS: I'll go with that.

6 (Laughter.)

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: All right. Well, they don't get any
8 easier. Okay. I think the next one was, what is the status of the two
9 nominees? So, two individuals have been nominated. A confirmation
10 hearing has been held, it was joint with my hearing.

11 And -- well, this is going to get way into Senate wonky
12 things, but their nominations were reported out of the Committee of jurisdiction
13 and so, they are pending now on what the Senate calls the Executive
14 Calendar, which is where nominations are eligible for consideration by the full
15 Senate.

16 And so, the Senate came back from its August work period
17 yesterday. And so, I expect that this fall, they'll continue, between other
18 business, like our budget and the debt ceiling and a number of other matters
19 that the Congress intends to take up, the Senate, of course it's only the Senate
20 that acts on nominations under the Constitution, but they'll be working in there,
21 I'm sure, any number of eligible nominations, including nominations that might
22 be yet to come before the Senate.

23 But I expect throughout the remainder of the fall, there will
24 be a lot of activity. So, these nominees are certainly eligible for movement
25 and action by the Senate at any time.

26 So, frankly, we could -- the Agency -- I know on the 18th

1 floor, there will be activity up there to be ready to have folks arrive anytime
2 now. So, that's the status. I don't know if anyone wants to --

3 COMMISSIONER BARAN: You're doing great.

4 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: -- I'm the former Senate staffer, so I
5 take that one about the procedure. Okay.

6 And then, the selection of the NRO, I think NRR was
7 mentioned, or just Office Directors in general, there are -- this is known, of
8 course, to probably all of you, that there are positions specified under law that
9 are selected by the Commission themselves under that process.

10 The Chairman would advance a candidate and needs to
11 receive a majority vote of the remainder of the Commission in order for that
12 individual to be appointed into this. Again, it's not all Agency management
13 positions, it's just a handful of them specified under law, but two of them are
14 the NRR and NRO Director.

15 Again, I've served here for a while, I've had a lot of
16 colleagues, I've had a lot of Chairmen, the Commission takes a lot of care and
17 attention with this matter, because these are very important leadership
18 positions for the Agency.

19 And we like to proceed in a very, very collegial manner, it
20 doesn't tend to be a divisive thing where it's people are voted on in a very
21 divided way. So, there is a lot of dialogue and consideration of the matter
22 that occurs amongst the members of the Commission prior to the selections
23 being made.

24 And there is -- it's a rather dynamic time at the NRC right
25 now. So, we have extremely competent SES ranks here in this Agency, so
26 whether or not the Commission is continuing to deliberate the permanent

1 selections, there are many, many able individuals that are acting in these
2 capacities right now.

3 We have extremely capable individuals acting as Directors
4 of both of those offices. And in some ways, that gives the Commission the
5 luxury of taking the time to make sure that their permanent selection is
6 something that they've collegially arrived at. Anything? No?

7 (Laughter.)

8 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Goodness sakes. I think that
9 covered the last two. I got five more than three written here, I don't know
10 what that question was.

11 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Are five more --

12 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Oh, five more, okay, productive.
13 So, I think I covered those. Yes, did I miss one?

14 COMMISSIONER BARAN: You answered them all.

15 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Okay, thank you. Do we have the
16 next question? Or the next five questions?

17 (Laughter.)

18 READER: Just one.

19 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Okay.

20 READER: The Regional Offices and those in the field are
21 the key to the NRC's oversight function. Is the Commission actively
22 reconsidering the number or structure of the Regional Offices?

23 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, I'll take a -- I'll begin a
24 response on that. Absolutely, I agree about the importance of Regional
25 Offices.

26 I have sometimes bored people with the story of the fact that

1 I began my federal career in a field, a regional office of an agency, and often,
2 I felt like that was the most immediately impactful work that I've done in my
3 federal career, was to be able to be out in a field element, visiting facilities,
4 doing management of projects and programs, which was the nature of the
5 work that I did at the time.

6 So, I'm in agreement with that statement entirely. But in a
7 similar vein, Regional Offices, as Headquarters Offices look at process
8 improvements, look at how they are structures, Regional Offices have to be a
9 part of that discussion.

10 And Regional Offices for NRC, the picture's already more
11 complicated than a bystander might believe, because there are programmatic
12 consolidations of certain execution of functions in various regions.

13 The spent fuel facility activities that occur in Region II,
14 Region I has consolidated activities as well. So, the Regions are actually not
15 pure regional or field elements for NRC.

16 There has been consideration over the course of decades
17 of various types of programmatic functions and where they would most
18 naturally reside within the Agency. But I think that any of the discussions
19 going on now, I would characterize as just a continuation of that dialogue.

20 How are the Regions structured? As Headquarters or
21 programs change here, should changes be made in Regions? Should
22 Regions have additional elements? If we were to see something like the
23 Wyoming Agreement State move forward, where uranium recovery activities
24 for the Agency as a whole were significantly smaller than before, would that
25 recommend some sort of change to how that's conducted in a Headquarters
26 element?

1 So, I actually think it's to the benefit of the Agency and the
2 Region that there's a lot of vibrancy around making sure that the Regions and
3 considers there are an element of how we look at, how are we structured, how
4 are we organized, is it the most efficient and effective way to carry out this
5 work?

6 But the question might be reflecting on is, there may be
7 awareness that the Commission did recently ask or direct the staff to consider
8 or develop criteria for, what would be the types of things that would trigger a
9 re-look at the number of Regions?

10 And so, that is so many steps away from any possible
11 recommendation or decision about the Regions we have now, about their
12 jurisdictional boundaries, about how many and where they're located.

13 My view, I was supportive of that direction. I think that we
14 want to know, what would be the external events that would happen that would
15 cause us to even begin an analysis of that?

16 And I think to have that at the ready will show, again,
17 consistent with things we've been talking about, that this Agency is very
18 thoughtful in preparing for the uncertainty bands around all these future
19 scenarios.

20 But to the extent that that would ever be viewed as the
21 Commission not valuing the Regions, I appreciate the opportunity to have this
22 question, because that is in no way reflective of that view.

23 COMMISSIONER BARAN: And, I think, implicit in your
24 statement there, or at least my view, is that the four Regions, as we have them
25 now, makes sense.

26 And the question is really thinking down the road, what are

1 the kind of things that could happen? What are these triggering events that
2 would have us take a look at whether or not any adjustments need to be made
3 on that?

4 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: And I think some of it, too, is a
5 reflection, I don't remember when Region V was absorbed into --

6 COMMISSIONER BURNS: 1993.

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: This is so great to have this
8 colleague -- 1993, so it isn't as if NRC always had four Regions. So, clearly,
9 there can be events that trigger this. It's just, I think it would be good to have
10 some sort of documented set of criteria that would be used to evaluate that.

11 COMMISSIONER BURNS: Yes. And also, some may
12 remember, we had a uranium recovery field office in Denver at one point,
13 which wasn't a separate Regional Office, but a separate entity. And I agree
14 with everything that my colleagues just said.

15 And partly why I think we raise the question is because, we
16 get the question on the outside and I think we understand, as you do, that the
17 question is more complicated than simply, oh, you're only regulating 90
18 nuclear power reactors now, so I'm just going to do it, my math, and do some
19 sort of funny math that then says you eliminate an office.

20 Well, it's more complicated than that, because there are
21 different programs, there are different considerations. You still have resident
22 programs, you still have field inspections and other types of things.

23 So, part of this is, I would say it's sort of like asking some of
24 the questions we did in Project AIM, what are those trigger points or what is
25 important for us in terms of sustainability and effective carrying out of the
26 Agency's mission, particularly in the front lines, where the Regions are?

1 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Do we have the next question?

2 READER: This is a very specific question, I'll try to read it
3 slow. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has given an advisory
4 opinion that the NRC Agreement State program is a state-delegated program
5 under the National Historic Preservation Act.

6 How have you evaluated this advisory opinion and what
7 activities should the NRC take in response to this opinion?

8 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I think, we're struggling a little bit
9 and I'm looking at some of our leadership team here and I'm getting some
10 looks that people are a little puzzled. It's not ringing a bell, even if I was
11 thinking it was some other advisory council, I'm just not certain.

12 Perhaps the individual who asked that question could
13 maybe -- if they could submit it as an Ask the EDO, maybe doing a little --
14 maybe in the reading or the writing of it, maybe some of the names of the
15 groups got changed or something. I'll apologize for that, but I don't think we'll
16 be able to handle that today.

17 READER: Okay. May I ask another question?

18 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Yes.

19 READER: This one is dealing with Yucca Mountain. Does
20 the Commission foresee the restart of Yucca Mountain in FY18? And should
21 this be considered in current workforce planning?

22 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I don't make any prediction on
23 whether or not the Congress will provide funds for the restart of some of our
24 Yucca Mountain activities in FY18. The -- we do have funding bills that were
25 passed by each chamber.

26 Some of you are likely aware that the House of

1 Representatives did include funding for NRC activities related to high-level
2 waste and Yucca Mountain. The Senate did not provide funding in their bill.
3 But these bills are yet to be taken up and adjudicated between the House and
4 the Senate, and then, they're yet to be enacted in some form by the end of the
5 fiscal year.

6 Perhaps they'll be continuing resolution, under which, in the
7 absence of specific language, we wouldn't be engaging on this funding matter.
8 But it should be resolved, I would think, at some point in the fall.

9 And then, the second part of the question was, should that
10 be a factor in strategic workforce planning? I think, I would represent that, in
11 the development of the FY18 budget, which is before the Congress right now,
12 the Agency did think about that, in terms of what expertise would be needed.

13 There are not a lot of different -- there's legal support and
14 positions and technical support and other things that would be needed to
15 reconstitute an op tempo for us on that. And I think that has been -- it is
16 embedded within the planning and resourcing that we've done for FY18.

17 And hopefully, we'll know the answer on receipt of funds
18 within the next few months. Certainly, at that point, if we did receive funds,
19 then we would make adjustment going forward. Anything? No? Okay.
20 Do we have another question?

21 READER: Another Yucca Mountain question. How do you
22 envisage the future of a Yucca Mountain Geologic Repository and reaching
23 consensus with the State of Nevada?

24 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Gosh, I don't know what to say to
25 that. Again, these questions, the answers I know are not satisfying, and it's
26 not as if the members of our Commission don't confront somewhat routine

1 solicitations for our broader views on this.

2 But I think speaking in my role as a member of this
3 Commission, we will, if funding is provided in FY18, continue to move forward
4 under our responsibilities under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act and the Atomic
5 Energy Act.

6 And we have a fairly narrow lane for, as a Commission and
7 as an Agency, that we navigate on this. The larger policy, public policy
8 dialogues about the equities and the consensus is something that really
9 occurs outside of our span of jurisdiction.

10 COMMISSIONER BURNS: I would agree. And part of that
11 is, at this point, a primary, if not the primary role of the Commission is in a
12 sense in its adjudicatory capacity, with respect to where the proceeding is.

13 And that is, basically, the cusp of the litigation end of the
14 contentions that have been filed to date, and I recognize that there might be
15 more that might be filed, if the adjudication is restarted. So, it really -- that's
16 about all we, I think, as a Commission, can say.

17 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: If we -- I might jump in, because
18 there was a question raised and I found it interesting enough that I was
19 provided some research. And it has to do, people are going to smirk a little
20 bit, but I seriously found this very interesting and I appreciate that an employee
21 raised this issue, but it had to do with a piece of public art sculpture that is in
22 front of the Two White Flint building.

23 And this individual felt that it reflected poorly, because it
24 looks kind of like it's got corrosion and rusting on it. And I really -- coming in
25 One White Flint, I wasn't that familiar with it.

26 But I -- just in the interests of kind of bringing awareness

1 about this, I thought, well, if people -- the individual indicated that visitors
2 actually comment negatively on it and that it makes us look like we're kind of
3 rusting and antiquated or something.

4 (Laughter.)

5 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: It was interesting. This person
6 actually suggested that there should be some sort of vote to remove this piece
7 of public art. So, I -- my first reaction was that it is interesting.

8 I'm kind of very interested in the beautification and public art
9 projects, I think they can add a lot of value. They are often very controversial
10 and poorly received, because art is such a subjective matter.

11 But there is actually a White Flint North art program and
12 Montgomery County has a program of landscape enhancement that is -- they
13 work with the developers of sites, such as the buildings that we occupy, and
14 the Montgomery County Planning Board actually reviews and approves this.

15 So, I think that our latitude to actually remove this sculpture
16 would be limited. But to the interest of anyone, the artist is David Kraisler and
17 the piece is called, Archetypes Circular.

18 And this is how the artist described it, he said, the
19 Stonehenge-like environment reaches out to the public, creating a positive
20 umbrella space around the viewer, symbolizing the NRC's protection of the
21 public's interest. The fourth dimensional experience occurs as the viewer's
22 internal rhythms synchronize with the rhythms created by the structure and
23 forms of the sculpture.

24 So, he is an artist out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and that
25 is where the piece was fabricated and it was installed in September of 1993.
26 So, I just appreciate that someone raised that, that they felt that that was

1 something that didn't reflect well on us.

2 And I wanted to, having pulled the thread on it, I wanted to
3 share that with individuals, because I took the question as a very sincere one.

4 STAFF COMMENT: I just wanted to share with you, the
5 material the sculpture is made out of is Core-10 Steel and it's intended to rust
6 and remain structurally stable, it's part of the aesthetic.

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you. I think we have time for
8 maybe one more question before I will ask the --

9 COMMISSIONER BURNS: And I would vote no, if someone
10 asked me.

11 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: To remove it or to keep it?

12 (Laughter.)

13 COMMISSIONER BURNS: I would vote no. I would vote
14 no on removing it.

15 (Laughter.)

16 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Okay. I don't --

17 COMMISSIONER BARAN: I abstain.

18 (Laughter.)

19 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: In the absence of a quorum, we
20 cannot act on the statue.

21 (Laughter.)

22 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: If we do not have any additional
23 questions, I will now invite Sheryl Burrows, the President of the National
24 Treasury Employees Union, to come to the stage to please provide remarks.
25 I think we can clap for Sheryl, that's --

26 (Applause.)

1 MS. BURROWS: Good afternoon, Commissioner Svinicki,
2 Chairman, managers, EDO McCree, and fellow bargain unit employees.
3 Currently, NRC employees are dealing with many issues.

4 These issues have the potential to seriously distract from
5 our ability to engage in our work and accomplish the Agency's safety mission.
6 They include a proposed budget that may well encroach on our federal
7 benefits, the possibility of a government shutdown, and the very personal
8 reduction in force that a few of our corporate support employees are now
9 facing.

10 How can we take control of our careers and continue to
11 successfully complete our work in this distracting environment? The answer
12 is that, in spite of factors that are not within our control, we do. We engage
13 in our work under the worst of external pressures. We strive to do our jobs
14 well, regardless of fewer resources.

15 We adhere to very high personal standards and a very high
16 organizational standard, based on values that we are encouraged to embrace
17 in every aspect of our professional lives as members of the NRC family. Most
18 of us know them by heart and they are: integrity, service, openness,
19 commitment, cooperation, excellence, and respect.

20 While we can address our external pressures by engaging
21 our representatives, in our community and through our vote, we can address
22 our internal pressures by striving to walk the talk of our NRC values.

23 The Union's focus is generally on what our NRC leaders and
24 managers need to do to improve your working environment and, to the extent
25 possible, NRC works to prevent bad things from happening to our bargaining
26 unit employees.

1 The Article 49 Working Group is a perfect illustration of the
2 value our Chapter adds to NRC employees. Article 49 of the Collective
3 Bargaining Agreement requires that a Union management working group be
4 formed, even if there is the possibility of a RIF somewhere far in the future.

5 Under Article 49, a working group was stood-up in late 2016,
6 with the purpose of finding ways to avert a RIF in the corporate support offices.
7 Since that time, the working group has explored various alternatives and
8 worked hard to place employees in corporate support offices who could
9 potentially be RIF'd into funded positions within their own offices and across
10 the Agency.

11 To that end, the number of potentially impacted employees
12 has been reduced from 73 to around a dozen total, with single-digits in the
13 bargaining unit. It is encouraging that the Agency and NTEU have been able
14 to effectively and aggressively reduce the number so drastically.

15 But NTEU will not waiver from our goal that not even one
16 employee who does not want to leave the NRC involuntarily because of a RIF,
17 will be forced to leave. NTEU will continue our partnership with the Agency,
18 with the hope that a RIF can be avoided.

19 NTEU will also continue to insist that our NRC leaders and
20 managers do not overlook the critical importance that employees, whose
21 numbers have been greatly reduced over the past year, understand the job
22 they are doing, have appropriate procedures in place to do their jobs, and
23 finally, through opportunities, such as details and rotations, as well as external
24 training, can come to work with a full tool belt.

25 This afternoon, there's something else that NRC would like
26 to focus on. Namely, the way that you, our employees, can more effectively

1 be a part of an Agency culture that not only acknowledges you as its most
2 valuable asset, but that NRC leaders fully incorporate that acknowledgment
3 into every action they take.

4 There's a saying that goes, I'm not angry because you lied
5 to me, I'm angry because I can no longer trust you. As a Union
6 representative, I regularly meet with employees who feel that they have placed
7 their trust in their leaders and managers and often regret doing so, because,
8 at best, they have received inaccurate information or, at worst, they have been
9 lied to.

10 The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, or FEVS, scores
11 over the last several years indicate that there is a systemic problem involving
12 trust in leadership at the NRC. So, whether you ended up speaking with the
13 Union or you suffered in silence, the issue is real. And that's the bad news.

14 The good news is that our Agency leadership is listening to
15 the FEVS scores and to our employees. Recently, our EDO, Victor McCree,
16 announced his commitment to work on the trust issue by undertaking the
17 Speed of Trust Initiative.

18 The upcoming Speed of Trust training is voluntary for our
19 employees. However, developing trust to further organizational good health
20 and support and engage productive employees is not. At the risk of sounding
21 like Mary Poppins, I urge you, as an NRC employee, to get involved in this
22 initiative.

23 It is a very real way to begin a dialogue that could not only
24 increase your satisfaction with your working environment, but it could also
25 increase your ability to grow your career. In any healthy relationship, trust
26 between the parties involved is paramount. Very little can be done without it.

1 Through the Speed of Trust Initiative, you should be able to
2 develop a firm understanding of what accountability means for you as an NRC
3 employee, and also what accountability should mean for your NRC leaders
4 and managers.

5 In that vein, the EDO has made it very clear that he is
6 engaged. He has extended an open-door invitation to any employee who
7 believes they cannot resolve their work-related issues or problems with their
8 management.

9 You can become a Speed of Trust trainer or you can take
10 the course and learn how trust is earned, because trust must be earned, it is
11 not the outcome of a training course. At a minimum, please take the training.

12 Most studies at the workplace emphasize the important role
13 that our leaders play and there is absolutely no question that they do. But
14 because our EDO has made it clear, he is invested in this initiative, don't let a
15 recalcitrant manager or supervisor short-change the strides that our Agency
16 can make.

17 Work on developing trust in your office and if you have a
18 manager or supervisor who is just not listening, get their attention by making
19 an appointment with Mr. McCree. Take our EDO at his word and make this
20 work.

21 Get involved in your office's labor management partnership,
22 and if you don't have one, start one. Join your office safety culture group.
23 Begin the dialogue of trust with your colleagues and engage your supervisors
24 at branch meetings. Put this on the agenda for your division and office, as
25 well as all-hands meetings.

26 NTEU is fully invested in furthering an Agency culture where

1 you will thrive and we will work with you to make this happen. Our Chapter
2 leaders work tirelessly on your behalf every day.

3 Please get involved, please help us, please help the Agency
4 and, as a result, help yourselves. You have everything to gain and deserve
5 nothing less. Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Thank you, Sheryl, for those
8 remarks. And with that, we will conclude our meeting today. Thank you all,
9 again, for coming over. Please exercise due care and caution in crossing
10 back across the street. And with that, we are adjourned.

11 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record
12 at 3:25 p.m.)