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Advance

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-8175

January 11, 1990

The Honorable Kenneth M. Carr
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Dear Chairman Carr:

We are writing to request your views on the effect of the "BEIR V" report of the National Academy of Sciences on the adequacy of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) regulations to protect the public health and safety.

As we are sure you are aware, the Committee on Environment and Public Works unanimously approved an amendment to the Clean Air Act to eliminate duplicative regulation under the Clean Air Act of radionuclide emissions from facilities licensed by the NRC under the Atomic Energy Act. The NRC supported this amendment, largely for the reason that the NRC believed that the existing regulations under the Atomic Energy Act already provided adequate protection to the public health and safety.

Subsequent to the Committee's receipt of the Commission's views and the adoption of the amendment, the National Academy of Sciences issued its BEIR V report on the Health Effects of Exposure to Low Levels of Ionizing Radiation ("BEIR V"). BEIR V indicates that certain low-level radiation may pose greater risks to public health than previously thought.

In light of this report, we would appreciate it if you would answer the following questions: First, does the NRC still believe that existing regulations under the Atomic Energy Act adequately protect the public health and safety? Does the NRC still believe that there is no public health and safety need for additional regulation under the Clean Air Act? Second, please explain how the Commission's radiation protection standards are derived. How do they reflect previous BEIR reports? How do existing regulations reflect current scientific views about the health effects of radiation? What is the NRC's interaction with EPA in establishing these standards? Third, will the Commission consider whether to revise its regulations based upon BEIR V? How would such a revision be accomplished? How will the agency take into account the conclusions of the BEIR V study?

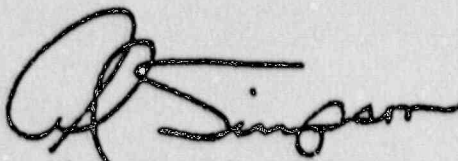
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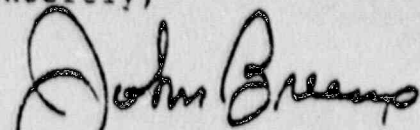
Your answers to these questions will be of great assistance to the Committee and the Senate during the upcoming consideration of the Clean Air Act by the Senate. Because the Senate debate on the Clean Air Act is scheduled to begin on January 23, we would appreciate your responses no later than the close of business on Friday, January 19, 1990.

With best personal regards,

Most sincerely,



Alan K. Simpson
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on
Nuclear Regulation



John B. Breaux
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Nuclear Regulation