

**Official Transcript of Proceedings**  
**NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

Title:                   33rd Regulatory Information Conference  
                                  Commissioner Wright Plenary Session

Docket Number:     (n/a)

Location:             teleconference

Date:                  Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Work Order No.:     NRC-1420

Pages 1-35

NEAL R. GROSS AND CO., INC.  
Court Reporters and Transcribers  
1323 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20005

(202) 234-4433

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

+ + + + + 33RD REGULATORY

INFORMATION CONFERENCE (RIC)

+ + + + +

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT PLENARY SESSION

+ + + + +

WEDNESDAY,

MARCH 10, 2021

+ + + + +

The RIC session convened via Video Teleconference, at 10:00 a.m. EST, Andrea Vail, Acting Office Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR), presiding.

PRESENT:

DAVID WRIGHT, NRC Commissioner

ANDREA VEIL, Acting Office Director, NRR

RAYMOND FURSTENAU, Office Director, Office of Research P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(9:59 a.m.)

MS. VEIL: And now I'm very pleased to

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.

introduce our plenary speaker of the day,  
Commissioner

David Wright.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Good morning. It's an honor to appear before you today as part of this virtual RIC. I'm coming to you from my home in South Carolina, which by itself is a sign of just how different things are from our last RIC in 2019. And just as this is not a typical RIC, my remarks today will not be the typical RIC remarks, although I'm sure you may have guessed that already. That said, I doubt you expected to see a Commissioner at his kitchen table, though, huh?

While I will definitely touch on some of the NRC's work and accomplishments in my remarks today, I'd also like to talk to you about some of my reflections on the year and share some personal stories as I do so.

I've been working from South Carolina for almost a year now, which has at times made me feel a bit like an outsider looking in at NRC Headquarters. I've missed seeing you all in person: my staff, the NRC staff, my Commissioner colleagues, as well as

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

our licensees, applicants and international counterparts. This past year truly put all of us to the test, both personally and professionally. There's no denying that 2020 and the beginning of 2021 has been difficult, certainly far, far away from normal years. For many the word devastation would be an understatement in describing this past year. There has been political and social unrest. Millions of people around the world contracted the coronavirus and many hundreds of thousands have died from it, a heartbreaking result.

Every person watching, listening and participating in this RIC conference has been touched in some way by this pandemic, some worse than others, but impacted nonetheless. My heart goes out to those of you have lost a loved one, a friend or have been hurt by the virus in some other way. If you contracted the virus and are here with us today, I give thanks and I'm very happy for you. If you've not contracted the virus, count your blessings and continue to do what you've done to stay safe and healthy.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

We will get through this pandemic as more and more people get vaccinated and can hopefully return to a more normal existence sooner rather than later, but for now here we are, living in a mostly virtual world. It's been surreal, it's been exhausting, it's meant pivots and expected and unexpected challenges. And as during any challenge in time I know we all have had to reflect on how to adapt, how to achieve our goals despite the challenges we face, how to survive and thrive.

During this past year I found myself coping with all the uncertainty and change by trying to find joy and laughter whenever possible. To be clear, there's nothing funny about the hardships we've faced or COVID, but there is a reason for the saying laughter is the best medicine. And it's true, laughter does make you feel good. It may not cure all of our ills, but laughter is proven to help improve our mood and our overall health. It reduces stress, helps our immune system, it relaxes us and it increases our creativity and connections to people. My remarks today will touch on what I view as the

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

transformative power of laughter and how it's helped get me through some very challenging times.

During this past year I've also reflected about what we've gained from the adversity we've faced.

This pandemic has forced all of us, both the NRC staff and all of our domestic and international partners who are here today to adapt, to change, to think creatively about how to get our work done and how to balance that work with our changed personal lives.

Circumstances have forced all of us to transform how we work and how we live. We've had to embrace and take well-calculated risks to continue living our lives, adopt new technology to continue to do schoolwork, our jobs, to socialize, and it has transformed the NRC and broken down barriers and silos at the agency. My remarks today will touch on the NRC's transformation journey and my own as a Commissioner. And what I can tell you is this: I'm excited about what I've seen accomplished and what's on the horizon.

The NRC has demonstrated its ability to

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

transform in key areas: people, risk, technology and innovation. This virtual RIC is a great example of that. So thank you to the NRC staff, contractors and participants who have made it possible. We have an amazing, talented and resilient group of people at the Agency. I didn't imagine a virtual RIC as a possibility when I first joined the Commission almost three years ago. To be here today shows how far we've come in a short time. So with that, let's get started with a story related to my own journey here today. You might be wondering about the title for my remarks. As I prepared for today I realized there seems to be a bit of a pattern emerging when it comes to my journey to each RIC. I know you all like data, trends, analysis and assessment, so maybe you'll appreciate this. I think there is a trend developing as funny things keep happening to me on my way to each year's RIC. So let me explain.

My first RIC was in 2019. The funny thing there I had no idea what to say or do. Trust me, it's funnier to you than it was to me at the time. I was a new Commissioner, nervous and a bit scared. I

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

had no clue how to introduce myself to you, much less what issues I needed to talk about before more than 1,000 people. I decided to lean into what makes me who I am: my values, my personal story, my family, my belief in teamwork, how I go about making decisions and how all of that working together led me to be an NRC Commissioner.

The second RIC one funny and one unusual thing happened. You can certainly guess the unusual one, the fact that the RIC had to be canceled because of the global pandemic. The funny thing though happened before it was canceled.

As all of you know, the Agency didn't cancel last year's RIC until right before it was supposed to be held. And not surprisingly, much work, effort and thought had gone into getting ready for the RIC by many dedicated NRC staff and some external stakeholders scheduled to participate in the different panels. For my part I'd already prepared my plenary remarks and was set to chair a panel on the electric grid as well. But then the funny thing happened.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.



In late February I got a call while on a boat in the middle of the Seine in Paris, France, while on work travel. Former Commissioner Burns was there, too, as were several attorneys from OGC. I could barely hear what my administrative assistant was saying on the phone, but I was pretty sure she said the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, or EPW, was trying to reach me about my confirmation hearing. So on the boat with the cold wind howling, because it was cold, I called the Senate EPW back and was told I'd better clear my calendar for you guessed it, March 11th, the very same day that I was scheduled to do my plenary remarks and chair the grid panel.

So before last year's RIC got canceled my plenary remarks and grid session were canceled, but that was an easy decision as I was confirmed for another term. And was honored to be joined at that hearing by a wonderful colleague and now Chairman of our agency, Chris Hanson. I'm also very grateful to be able to do that canceled grid session at this year's RIC, and

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

I want to give a special shout out to Candace de Messieres for her help, both last year and this year.

So, what was a funny thing that happened on the way to this year's RIC? Well, when I left Rockville last March, directly after my confirmation and celebrating with my staff, here we are at Pinstripes, I thought I was only going home for a weekend. The joke as you can imagine was most definitely on me. Talk about a transformed journey. I literally only packed two changes of clothes and my toiletries. And then the world shut down and it would be months before I returned to Maryland from South Carolina.

I look back on it now and I just laugh because what else can you do? Really sometimes all you can do is shake your head and laugh and look for the silver lining, or anything positive and just keep moving forward because life and living calls for that.

I have reflected quite a bit during the past year about what's important to me, and what I found is that for me laughter has truly been the best medicine in this unbelievably challenging time.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

Laughter is something that's always been important to me because of a very important person to me: my dad.

If you heard my 2019 RIC remarks, you may recall that my dad was a lifelong radio and TV broadcaster and personality who went from a radio announcer at age 14 to owning his own 100,000 watt radio station while on the side working as a PGA Tour radio golf reporter for 50 years and traveling as a stand-up comic appearing at various venues across the country. Dad really loved to laugh and he loved to make others laugh even more. And the lesson I learned from him and leaned on this past year is that laughter helps move us forward. It's not always easy, but being able to laugh especially in the face of adversity is necessary in order to be happy and to rediscover happiness.

So how can laughter help you get through things? Well, it releases endorphins, which is good because you never know what to expect each day especially in this COVID time. For example, this summer while I was having a virtual periodic with John Lubinski, our NMSS director, I got a call from

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

my 90-year-old mother. You all may remember mom. She held the Bible for me when Former Chairman Svinicki first swore me in 2018. She's also currently my neighbor. She lives down the street from me here in South Carolina.

Anyway, mom called with an emergency. She said she heard something in her house that was scaring here and she wanted me to come over and find out who or what it was. Obviously in normal times I would not have been able to help her because I'd have been at headquarters in Maryland. But like many of you who are now juggling personal and professional responsibilities, I got off the phone with John and hustled over to her house where she met me outside.

I picked up a broom in the garage; why a broom I don't know, but that's what I grabbed, and I went inside her house. Activate the endorphins here because as I went in I immediately heard something or someone moving around. And as soon as I opened the door and entered the living room, I came face to face with an intruder, a very scared and angry squirrel.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

It was game on. David versus Rocky, the angry squirrel. I believe it was actually the Rocky the Squirrel, too, because that sucker had to be flying. He was moving so fast. And all I had was a broom and what I really needed was a big net, I mean a really big net.

It took days to repair the entry holes to the home, both inside and out and to finally catch Rocky and his accomplices; three of them, but it got done and the intruders were relocated to a habitat far, far away. Although there was damage done to her house, a lot of damage, and none of the experience was fun or enjoyable for me, mom and I did have a pretty good laugh about it afterwards, plus it definitely created a memory of a lifetime for us to share.

So find things to laugh about, even the unexpected or inconvenient. Yes, that's right, everyone, laughter enhances job satisfaction and job performance, especially for those who work in creative fields or rely on their critical thinking and problem solving skills.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

Now for those of you wondering, chasing Rocky did not improve my job performance during my periodic with John; sorry, John, but it did increase my engagement and productivity later that day as I worked on several votes. And it has been proven to do so as well as increase creativity, collaboration and well-being while relieving stress and more.

Laughter also brings people together. It cultivates a positive work environment and culture. And laughing with others can actually foster connections, too, as well as strengthen existing relationships. I encourage each of you here at the NRC and the RIC to find ways to make our work fun and more enjoyable and to have fun with those we work with, too, because smiling, happiness and laughter, they're transformative.

And it's not only laughter that transforms. Facing adversity also brings about growth and change, and from my perspective the adversity we faced this past year has made the NRC transform and grow stronger.

As I mentioned, our transformation efforts

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

have been focused on the themes of people, risk, technology and innovation. I'm grateful in particular for the focus on our people as the NRC's people are truly our greatest asset. The way each of you has shifted to a largely virtual work environment is nothing sort of inspiring.

You've gotten work done while handling so much in your personal lives. COVID has meant that we've had to change the way we get things done. We're having to work mainly from home. That by itself has changed the dynamic because we're at home and not able to interact with our friends, our family, our coworkers or our counterparts in the same way. That can create pressure, new pressures that we have to deal with, but that doesn't mean that you're alone in your work world, nor do you have to be because we're all having the same dynamics in our daily world, too. All of us have done a great job of making adjustments. We've adapted to everything thrown at us here in 2020 and now 2021 as good or better than many other agencies.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

the NRC's Employee Assistance Program, the NRC's Staying Connected Team, SBCR and the advisory committees, and the EDO. These individuals and their groups put together podcasts, messages, polls, contests, employee programs, talks and ideas on how to beat the winter blues, how to deal with challenges of working from home and provided tips for improving work/life balance. This has been a wonderful and uplifting part of the NRC's culture this year. I can tell you personally getting to judge the ugly sweater contest improved my well-being.

Yes, we are a safety regulator and yes, that's what we remain laser focused on day in and day out, but we do need to stay connected for our physical and mental well-being. I urge you to share your experiences with others, especially those you're in contact with each day. My challenge to you as a person, look for opportunities to laugh and to be happy and to smile. It's actually easier to smile than to frown. And as discussed smiling and laughing can improve you in many, many ways including becoming a more productive worker.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.



In addition to its focus on people this last year has seen the NRC place an increased emphasis on the consideration of risk as COVID forced us to look more closely at and adapt how we regulate. I'm truly amazed at the varied ways the staff has used creative thinking and risk insights to ensure that the limitations put on us during the pandemic did not affect your regulatory mission. And I appreciate the input and insights we received in this area from our licensees, applicants, and international counterparts.

As you know, the NRC staff worked to balance the benefits of inspections against the risk of COVID exposure. Taking these risks into account we used dashboards to track trends and make decisions on the number of inspection staff on site and reduced the duration of in-person inspections by conducting remote entrance and exit meetings using resident inspectors for certain on-site portions of inspections and taking advantage of technology. We've evaluated risk of certain licensing actions and

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

leveraged past experience data and technology to streamline licensing reviews to address challenges licensees and applicants have faced.

We've faced some criticism about our acceptance of risk in these areas and not all of our decisions have been popular. It's understandable because we've changed how we do things, and change from the norm is hard. But from my perspective we hadn't what we do and that's meeting our safety mission. In fact I'm inspired by what I see, a group of dedicated individuals meeting our important safety mission by engaging with and considering each other and counterparts and leveraging experience to accept reasonable risk.

On a personal note the staff's engagement has made me reflect on my dad and how he lived his life. My dad died on Martin Luther King Day, 2013, which was also President Obama's inaugural for his second term. It was a very hard day as well as a hard week because his funeral would happen a few days later on the following Friday morning.

I had to write his obituary and his eulogy,

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

so I spent hours alone in his chair in his home office scouring through everything I could looking for things that spoke to what he had done and accomplished over his life on this earth. I was very sad at first; depressed is probably more like it, but by the time Friday rolled around I'd found a new appreciation for the life dad lived and about the confidence and strength he had given me.

There's no doubt that my dad lived a full life. Not all of it was pleasant or great for sure, but dad was willing to take the risks necessary in order to be happy with himself every day. And that's what I remember most about him today.

The motto of the State of South Carolina is "Dum spiro spero." While I breathe, I hope. My goal is to leave that same legacy of positive memories for my family and my friends and coworkers as my dad left me. I encourage you to strive to do the same in our life.

Martin Luther King certainly understood life and what living was all about. When he was 38 years old he gave a speech that spoke to this belief.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

He said, and I quote: You may be 38 years old as I happen to be. One day some great opportunity stands before you and calls you to stand up for some great principle, some great issue, some great cause and you refuse to do it because you're afraid. You refuse to do it because you want to live longer. You're afraid that you'll lose your job or you're afraid that you'll be criticized or that you'll lose your popularity. Or you're afraid that somebody will stab you or shoot at you or bomb your house, so you refuse to take the stand. Well, you may go on and live until your 90, but you're just as dead at 38 as you would be at 90. And the cessation of breathing in your life is but the belated announcement of an earlier death of the spirit.

Dr. King's words speak volumes. And the challenge is a good one. We're each alive and we're each breathing, but not everyone is truly living. Truly living requires some action on your part, too. And that's the ability to engage that action. Well, believe it or not, that ability to act is already within you. You just have to engage it.

I see and appreciate the engagement of

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

technology here at the NRC. We've embraced technology to work smarter and more creatively in so many areas including data analytics to highlight areas for regulatory attention and improvement.

The staff rolled out IdeaScale, a technology platform that allows internal collaboration on current challenges. We've implemented an initiative to make the processing of Agreement State license requests for reciprocity completely paperless. Region III's Materials Licensing Branch transitioned to a fully digital licensing process using digital signatures and novel encryption technology. We've also moved to a completely paperless national source tracking system annual reconciliation.

While technology has allowed us to not only continue to do our important work, but to improve how we do our work, I want to take a moment to highlight how important stepping away from technology can be.

It's so easy to get tied to your computer and to your phone these days, but I encourage all of you to remember the benefits of stepping away from

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

it. Not only does it help with focus and engagement, it also provides a much-needed break. And you never know what you might see. Over the past year I've taken to getting outside and going for walks, some of them pretty long. I don't wear earbuds or anything like that because I like to experience what's around me: the people, the birds, the rabbit, the deer and the sounds. I use this time to focus on the positive.

And what's more positive than a rainbow? Well, that would be a double rainbow. During the past year I've seen more rainbows than I can count. My staff calls me the rainbow whisperer because I've seen and photographed so many this year. And if this year has not taught us anything else, it's that we can't take our lives for granted.

We're lucky to be a part of this great world we live in so I encourage you to make the time you have memorable. Appreciate the world around you and find and do things that make you happy and make you smile and make you laugh.

One of the things that is truly remarkable

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

is thinking about all the unexpected ways COVID has forced us to be innovative. We've all had to find innovative ways to celebrate milestones, both positive and negative. We've had to say goodbye to treasured colleagues like Ho Nieh and Former Chairman Kristine Svinicki either over the phone or on a virtual meeting.

We've also welcomed new colleagues like Chairman Hanson and his team in an almost completely virtual environment. We've heard good news. I'm expecting another grandbaby, a grandson this spring. It's not multiple units this time, just a single unit. He's a rainbow baby, too, which just adds to my happiness. And we've had to deal with horrible news as well.

We've all had to do this in a very different way because of our circumstances. There were fewer, if any, hugs of congratulations or comfort. No flying or driving on a whim, to work or for personal travel. At times it seemed like something new and different was happening to us several times a day. For example, literally overnight I like many of you got introduced to virtual school. That same March 13th weekend

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

that I went home my youngest son Andrew, who was in his final semester at Anderson University, came home for spring break. Like many other college kids he never went back. Before the weekend was over Anderson University went virtual for the rest of the semester. So my son took over my home office to finish out his senior year, take his final exams and graduate while I took over the kitchen table to do my work. Talk about an adjustment for both of us. I'm still not over being able not to print anything, by the way. Man, do I miss my printer. Oh, man.

And I know that both Andrew and I had it easy compared to many of you as my son didn't need help with virtual school. Some of you all, including many members of my staff, turned into homeschoolers, baby sitters and full-time parental or elder care givers overnight on top of already being moms and dads, wives and husbands and dedicated hard-working NRC employees. I'm impressed by all of you that are managing this while never losing focus of our important work and

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.



mission. Handling all these competing responsibilities at once takes creativity and innovation, and it's not easy.

I also, like many of you, learned a bit about quarantine baking. I went from cooking for myself to trying to cook for me and Andrew and I quickly learned that he has different ideas of cooking than mine. On that first Saturday morning I asked him if I could cook some breakfast. He said yes. I asked him how do you like your eggs? He said in a cake. Okay. I guess if he really wanted to be on point he would have asked me to make him some pancakes, muffins or banana bread.

But he was certainly on point by joining the ranks of many who are now planning a wedding, one that will most likely be impacted by COVID restrictions. He and his fiancée will be married on June 26th after becoming engaged this past August. At some point all you can do is laugh about everything that is happening though and move forward because we're not always able to change what is happening around us.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

The good news, especially for those of us quarantine bakers, is that laughing can burn as many calories per hour as walking. I wouldn't mind laughing off a few quarantine pounds myself.

I'd like to close with an important lesson, one that I'd already learned but that remained true during the past year of this pandemic. It's the importance of having and showing gratitude. This connects to each aspect of the NRC's transformation journey.

Many of you know that I'm a cancer survivor, stage 3 colon cancer. Here's a not so funny thing that happened last year. I was told last year that I had prostate cancer only to be told seven weeks later as I was preparing for a radical surgery that I did not have cancer. Although it had mimicked cancer and it fooled many docs, it wasn't. And it was treatable. So having been where I've been and traveled the path I've had to travel over the last decade, well, it just makes being alive much more meaningful.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

Colon cancer taught me a great deal, and I use it every day. When bad things happen, I look to make something good come from it. You're going to have bad things happen to you in your life, and sometimes those events are bigger than you are or what you think you can handle. Those events may even bring you to a crossroads in your life. Your choices after taking risk and all other options into account can make all the difference. Knowing when to ask for help is important, too.

Another thing I learned from my cancer is that I was not bulletproof and that I needed the help of people. I needed the help of doctors, nurses, family and friends who could provide me the medical help and the emotional support I needed. And I needed to find and talk about my cancer with others, especially those who had had similar experiences through a support group or organization.

I encourage you when you run into problems that are bigger than you; and you will, don't panic. Take a deep breath and think of ways to innovate, to come up with actions that will help you find peace

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

and comfort and restore happiness to your daily routine. Find accountability partners, support groups, organizations and prayer partners that you can rely on to help and support you. Lean on friends and family whenever possible. And when you can be that support for others in need as well. And use technology to connect to others, but make sure you maintain the right balance.

Take some time for yourself, time to decompress, watch a funny movie or get out and be in nature and experience what's happening around you. Step away from the computer and the phone. Find what makes you happy at work and at home and do more of it. Let this Southern guy give you a suggestion that can make a difference: When you're doing anything from walking to running to grocery shopping, one simple thing that you can do that can impact other person's day and life is to just smile and say hello. Even with a mask on you can see the smile in someone's eyes. Believe it or not that simple recognition may be the best thing that will happen to that person all

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

day long, so please don't miss an opportunity to create happiness.

You can change people's lives as well as your own by just being happy in what you do, too, and that includes laughing out loud, having fun in what you're doing. Through laughter and other positive actions you can take I have no doubt that as a result and in return your life will get better, too. So smile more. It's much easier than frowning.

Finally, a simple and easy thing you can do is to simply do more of what makes you laugh. Maybe you like watching funny movies, playing with a pet or having a conversation with a friend. Whatever those things are that make you happy, that make you smile and make you laugh, I urge you to rediscover them and do them often.

Thank you for the work that you do and how you've gotten it done during the last year. My NRC family is a remarkable bunch and I'm proud to have the opportunity to work with you. More importantly I can't wait to be around you again soon. Until then I'm honored to do the NRC's important work from

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

right here at my kitchen table in South Carolina. And I will continue to look for rainbows, bake cakes for my son, chase squirrels for my mom, laugh to honor my dad and try to follow MLK, Jr.'s example to live a life well lived.

Thank you very much for listening today and I look forward to questions.

MS. VEIL: What a wonderful video and you're getting lots of support, Commissioner Wright, in the Q&A tab. It is just remarkable. It was a wonderful and creative message that you provided.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Andrea, thank you very much for that. Because the RIC was going to be virtual this year I thought I wanted to do something a little bit different and I was hoping it was going to be well-received. Writing it and creating it and doing everything that I had to do was a lot of work, I don't mind telling you. It took a lot of time to create and to edit, but it was a lot of fun and I'm happy that I did it.

I had a lot of help, too, though. I've

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

got to thank my staff, all of them. Cathy Kanatas, my chief; and Kim Lora, who's my AA; Carol Lazar, my legal; Carmel Savoy, who's a backup for me as an AA. She's my other admin. Joe Gillespie, who's filling in as a part-time, has given us some stuff. Shakur Walker, who's my reactor TA. And Samantha Lav, who's my material's TA. And without their help I couldn't have had some of it.

And I also need to thank my mom, my late-dad, my two sons who gave me material, as well as Rocky, the angry squirrel, and Mother Nature for giving me some good material.

And, Andrea, before we go into the Q&A, I want to take a second, if I could, on a more serious note to recognize what happened this week 10 years ago tomorrow, and that was the accident at Fukushima that was initiated by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami. I've had the opportunity to visit the site and I have developed friendships with many of the regulators over there, and others, as well. And like you and others who have already verbalized this already, I want to recognize the dedicated

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

professionals from all around the world who responded to that accident, and the tireless work from everyone that went into developing and implementing the safety enhancements after that event. So, thank you for your comments and letting me sneak that in.

MS. VEIL: Absolutely, Commissioner.

Are you ready for your first question?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I guess.

MS. VEIL: The first question is what do you consider the most challenging aspect of working in a diverse environment?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Wow.

Communication probably is -- I mean, I think that's the issue. We all come from different backgrounds. We come from different points of view maybe, different perspectives. We have to deal with each other not knowing some of those backgrounds, so we've got to be able to listen to everybody and try to understand everyone. You know, because if we can't do that, we're not really going to get into solving the problems that need to be solved and addressed.

So, to me, I think the communication part

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.



of that. And we have to appreciate and accept that there's no one background. No one's right, right? We have to understand. And I think that's really important. And I really do try to do that.

MS. VEIL: Well, thank you, Commissioner. For the next question, given your unique perspective as having been an economic regulator and now a safety regulator, please describe your vision of the NRC as it moves forward with a multitude of new skills and methods of implementing NRC's mission in response to the pandemic. Do you see the NRC carrying forward the efficiency gains and not returning to the prior normal? Inspections, inspector remote work, flexible works hours are some examples.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: That's a lot of -- that's a long question. Lot of answers could come there. So let me first just talk about transformation very quickly, because it's always morphing, right? It's something that's not -- it's just going to change, right? We're never going to get to that end point. Yesterday we heard Commissioner Caputo in her remarks and she talked about being agile and being

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

nimble, which we have to be, right? And you can't transform unless you can accept what's happening right in front of you. She asked the question something -- to paraphrase, something like you think you know how to do your job?

Let me throw a pandemic at you, right? And let's see if you can perform. And we've done one heck of a job there. So I think we're all going to be learning and trying to apply what's happened there.

I also heard yesterday in the staff panel at the end of the day, right, that followed I think -- Stephanie Coffin I think was who said this. She talked about looking for progress, kind of like the -- I guess it's a motto: Look for progress, not perfection.

And I think in all of this we can't be afraid, right? To be afraid of change is paralyzing in a way. So to me transforming is not being afraid. You've got to use -- you've got to be informed by data, you've got to be informed by experience and historical stuff and make a -- use that to help inform

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

you so that you can make good decisions to move forward.

And our efficiency principle speaks to that, right? And that was highlighted yesterday a number of times. I think also Commissioner Caputo talked about that as well. And I agree with that. So I hope that answers the question.

MS. VEIL: Thank you, Commissioner. And the next question is: what are your priorities?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, my first priority, believe it or not, is to go get my Moderna shot. I'm actually leaving here after -- I guess later this afternoon. I'm going to drive back to South Carolina and I'm going to get my shot tomorrow. And then, well, I'm going to get back up. I miss you guys. And there's nobody really in the building there used to be and I really miss that.

On a work front there's a bunch. We've got -- the most important thing for me is being a collegial member of the Commission, right? I need to be in a listening mode with them. I got to be in touch with them, understand how they want to do -- what's important for them and how they're approaching

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

things, as well as looking at the staff's input and their views, as well as outside stakeholders and anybody else that needs to be listened to and heard because I want to have as much information, as much data as I can, and historical context, too, to help inform me to make my decisions going forward.

MS. VEIL: Well, thank you. Next question is appreciate your personal and uplifting messages. In that spirit what are your views on innovation as it relates to risk-informed regulations and advanced nuclear licensing activities?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, I mean there's a lot going on in those fields and the Chairman spoke to a lot of that in his remarks as well. And I agree, the advanced reactor space is something -- Part 53, we got to really get active in. We've got to -- I think he talked about accident-tolerant fuel as well, and I agree with him on that.

For me it's about embracing and -- and again, it's all about communication, right? We've got to understand the importance of -- and what is important to each of our colleagues. You've got to

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

understand what's important that's before you. You have to understand the historical context of where it's come from. Because if you don't know what's happened in the past, you're probably going to repeat what happened in the past. So you want to inform yourself on that. And that's why data is so critical. And I'm so excited because of the things that are happening with EMBARK and the Innovation NRC stuff that's going on and the other programs that we've got that are focusing our people on this.

And I have a lot of contact with the staff level, the higher staff, but it's the person, every day staff person that's in the buildings that you never see that are really driving this. And the work that they're doing is just incredible. And I'm excited. I really want to bring them before the Commission meetings sometimes and let them tell the story about how they got to where they're at and how it's different from what they first thought they were looking at. Because I know there's been change along the way. And to me that's exciting and it's something that I want to share. And I want to empower them to

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

do that, right? I want to pat them on the back. I want to encourage them.

And I guess from a personal uplifting empowering side, that's kind of what I like to do. This job is not about me, but it's about the Agency and improving the Agency. And it's the people of the Agency, from the ground up that make it what it is.

I'm just honored to be here.

MS. VEIL: Great answer. Next question: What do you hope to accomplish during your second term and what do you want as your legacy at the Agency?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Oh, man. Well, so what I'd like to I guess get accomplished is as much as I can get done. There's a lot to do, right? I hope that we can get -- in the time that I have we can get to some big stuff. I mean, I'm one of four Commissioners, and hopefully we'll get five here soon. And again, it's that working with my staff to work with the other offices to determine what's out there that we can really focus on and get to a consensus on and move forward? So things like

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

decommissioning, ROP, accident-tolerant fuel, Part 53. We just did the resident inspector paper. So those things like that. We've got security papers that are out there. So those things where we can -- that kind of bubble to the top, I want to get those done.

As far as the legacy for me, I'm hopeful that before I leave here that I'll be remembered maybe as a person who was authentic, who was a good leader, who got things done, that maybe I motivated people to do things that they didn't think they could do. And I want to be remembered as the guy -- he was that guy, right. Whatever that it is, I want them to think maybe I had that it. I guess that's kind of where I'd like to be.

It's been fun the last couple years; because I've not even been here three years yet, to come in as truly an outsider, from South Carolina in a way with none of the backgrounds that the other people here have, but I have my own, right? And to be able to become a part of the fabric of the NRC,

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

it's been fun and I've enjoyed it. And I really enjoy what I do.

MS. VEIL: That's definitely obvious, Commissioner, and I would really like to read in the last maybe like 50 seconds that we have some of the messages that came through, because I think you'd very much enjoy them.

Thank you, Commissioner Wright, for the most inspirational RIC speech I have ever heard. Thank you for such a thoughtful and inspiring presentation. You're the best speaker. Thank you for your infectious attitude and motivating support.

And in the last 30 seconds I want to just express again how inspiring the video was. There's a lot more kudos in the Q&A tab here, but thank you for your remarks, thank you for your video. If there are any closing remarks, you have a few more seconds because I want to make sure we get to the next session on time. But you've got about seven seconds if you'd have any closing remarks.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I'm very humbled. Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.



MS. VEIL: All right. With that, Commissioner, thank you again for your time and for your thoughtful engagement. And with that, I'll close the session. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 10:41 a.m.)

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS 1323 RHODE  
ISLAND AVE., N.W.

(202) 234-4433

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

(202) 234-4433