

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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BRIEFING ON EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY, AFFIRMATIVE
EMPLOYMENT, AND SMALL BUSINESS

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WEDNESDAY,

DECEMBER 14, 2022

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The Commission met in the Commissioners' Conference Room, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland, at 10:00 a.m. EST, Christopher T. Hanson, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

CHRISTOPHER T. HANSON, Chair

JEFF BARAN, Commissioner

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner

ANNIE CAPUTO, Commissioner

BRADLEY R. CROWELL, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT:

BROOKE P. CLARK, Secretary of the Commission

MARIAN ZOBLER, General Counsel

NRC STAFF:

AMANDA BLACK, Chair, Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee

ANTHONY BRIGGS, Small Business Program Manager, Office of Small
Business & Civil Rights

DANIEL DORMAN, Executive Director for Operations

JACK GIESSNER, Regional Administrator, Region III

MARY LAMARY, Chief Human Capital Officer

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

MJ ROSS-LEE, Deputy Director, Division of Safety Systems, Office of
Nuclear Reactor Regulation

ALSO PRESENT:

SHERYL SANCHEZ, President, National Treasury Employees Union
Chapter 208

PROCEEDINGS

1 10:00 a.m.

2 CHAIR HANSON: Good morning, everyone. I am
3 convening the Commission's public meeting on human capital and equal
4 opportunity employment. Twice a year, we get to meet and have an update
5 on significant human capital initiatives and equal employment opportunities.
6 Our last meeting was in June of this year.

7 Today, we're going to be discussing topics that are very
8 important to ensuring NRC employees have a safe working environment
9 where they can pursue their career goals and help the agency fulfill its
10 mission.

11 Before we begin the discussion this morning, I'll ask my
12 colleagues if they have any remarks they'd like to make. No. Okay. With
13 that, Dan, it's over to you.

14 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Chair
15 Hanson and Commissioners. Staff is happy to be here today to update you
16 on the progress and accomplishments of the equal employment opportunity,
17 affirmative employment, and small business programs.

18 Our strategic plan goals provide a framework for
19 accomplishing our safety and security mission with excellence. And while
20 our workforce is resilient, over the past several years, the pandemic,
21 telework, and reentry have challenged our agency with respect to another
22 strategic goal, our organizational health.

23 In order to continue to effectively carry out our mission, we
24 must foster a healthy organization. That includes ensuring that, as we

1 make decisions, we take into account a diverse range of backgrounds,
2 experiences, and views, as well as ensuring that people feel free to share
3 those views. Focusing on these efforts will strengthen our resilience, help
4 us to recruit and maintain a highly-capable, adaptable, and diverse
5 workforce, and ensure that we continue to successfully achieve our mission.

6 The good news is we have key resources in place to
7 support these efforts. Our leadership model, speed of trust, our desired
8 culture team will help us to fulfill our mission while adhering to the principles
9 of good regulation and our organizational values.

10 We also have another critically important resource to help
11 us as we navigate through these challenges: the Office of Small Business
12 and Civil Rights. They help us carry out our obligations under the various
13 civil rights and small business statutes. But more than that, they are a key
14 part of the team in promoting and supporting new and ongoing efforts to
15 recruit, develop, and retain a diverse workforce and build a fair, equitable,
16 and inclusive environment.

17 Today's discussion will demonstrate our continued
18 commitment to ensuring the NRC is an organization that nurtures and
19 supports diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and believes that
20 small businesses are key partners in accomplishing our important safety and
21 security mission.

22 Now I'd like to introduce my fellow presenters. First,
23 Vonna Ordaz, Director of the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights, will
24 provide an overview of the equal employment opportunity, diversity and
25 inclusion, and small business programs, including senior leadership's

1 commitment to face challenges head on. She will be followed by Anthony
2 Briggs, our agency Small Business Program Manager in SBCR, who will
3 discuss the important role that small businesses have in helping the NRC
4 achieve our mission and the innovative partnerships and ideas that our small
5 business program has on helping us build our resilience.

6 Then Jack Giessner, our Region III Regional Administrator,
7 will discuss some of the challenges our regions are facing and how they
8 have responded and the important steps that they are taking to rebuild
9 connections and trust with our workforce. Jack will be followed by MJ Ross
10 Lee, Deputy Director in the Division of Safety Systems in NRR, who will
11 discuss some of the important steps NRR is taking to foster a more diverse,
12 equitable, inclusive and accessible environment that will enable them to
13 continue to successfully achieve the mission.

14 Amanda Black, the Chair of the Federal Women's Program
15 Advisory Committee, will discuss the important role that our equal
16 employment opportunity advisory committees and affinity groups have at our
17 agency, some of their accomplishments, and how they will continue to
18 support our efforts going forward. And, finally, Mary Lamary, Chief Human
19 Capital Officer, will provide an update on our efforts to build and support that
20 highly-capable, adaptable, and engaged workforce that we need to
21 accomplish our mission with excellence.

22 This concludes my introductory remarks, and I'll turn it over
23 to Vonna.

24 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you, Dan. And good morning,
25 Chair, Commissioners, and all of our NRC family today. It's an honor to

1 come before you to discuss the status of equal employment opportunity and
2 diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs at the NRC. And
3 thank you for allowing us to bring along a few of our partners and colleagues
4 to discuss these important topics.

5 Each year, when we prepare to brief you on the previous
6 fiscal year, we like to sum everything up with a theme. So this year, as we
7 spoke amongst the 13 of us in SBCR, I was reminded of how the year was
8 just like being on a hike, a climb if you will, and how our endurance has been
9 tested. We are all aware of the many challenges the agency has faced over
10 the last few years. Like everyone else, we pivoted from the pandemic, and
11 we were successful and extremely productive. However, it seems that the
12 success we experienced comes at a cost. Employees have various and
13 diverse perceptions of our new normal, which is now our current state.
14 Since an individual's perception is their reality, our challenges have affected
15 how we react and respond to one another.

16 But there is a bright spot. We see the issues. As an
17 agency of so many amazing staff members and plenty of overachievers, we
18 want to make it right. We want to honor diversity of existence and of
19 thought, and we want to find our ideal culture. There will always be ups and
20 downs, but our goals don't change. We always look up. We are resilient.
21 This is a reality that informs the title of the briefing today and how we want to
22 proceed with our information.

23 Next slide, please. So in order to overcome the
24 challenges, we must face them. And to face the challenges, we must name
25 them. What are we dealing with? So how do the challenges compete with

1 our goals and aspirations? These challenges on this slide come from the
2 agency's performance review risk that's discussed amongst senior leaders
3 quarterly. Also, we know there are positive things going on. How do we
4 hone those tools for maximum effect and maximum resilience?

5 So everything listed here is multidimensional. And though
6 they are all related, they each require unique combinations of tools, the
7 correct gear if you will. So specifically for us in SBCR, the pace of change
8 in the field of DEIA across the federal government and the status of the
9 agency's hiring initiative, we must continue to explore and expand staff tools
10 to educate and engage offices at a macro level and staff at the individual
11 level. This must be done with a balance of being an independent agency
12 and with a view of maintaining the NRC's commitment to DEIA and being a
13 federal model EEO employer.

14 Next slide, please. So as we look out on the horizon of
15 data, how do the numbers represent the challenges? Here you see several
16 of the FEVS indices. The columns in yellow comprise the DEIA index. The
17 FY22 FEVS was the first year that this particular index was calculated. I
18 also have the individual pieces that go into that cumulative score.
19 Comparatively speaking, our numbers are good, especially as compared
20 with the federal government as a whole.

21 However, when we look at other data points, such as our
22 MD-715 report that we provide to the EEO Commission, this is our agency's
23 annual DEIA report if you will, and also the staff demographics where we see
24 a slightly different story. Other NRC data sources reveal DEIA disparities
25 related to women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in areas such

1 as workforce composition, position and grade levels, internal promotions,
2 new hires, training and developmental opportunities, retention efforts, and
3 separations.

4 A copy of our MD-715 report and workforce tables are
5 included in the briefing materials and also a copy of the executive summary
6 and year-end permanent staff demographic tables are also in the materials.

7 Next slide, please. In terms of the EEO complaints, what
8 do our numbers say? Steady in the climb. That's right. The agency's
9 EEO program has remained steady and, despite the EEO complaint activity
10 spiking during the FY19 and FY20 reporting period, the agency's complaint
11 activity has been consistently stable and remains low in comparison to other
12 federal government agencies of our size.

13 With our new innovative and upgraded EEO complaints
14 tracking system called EntelliTrak, we are now able to utilize our complaint
15 data in ways we haven't done before. Starting in FY20, we began tracking
16 the number of EEO contacts that came to our virtual or physical office. EEO
17 contacts are individuals who are experiencing an issue but don't know what
18 their options are. So SBCR meets with these contacts individually, listens
19 to their concerns, then provides choices on where a person can go for
20 potential resolution. Some of these contacts simply just want to be heard.
21 Others may fit better within OCHCO's anti-harassment program or achieve
22 better communication simply by discussing the issues with their
23 management, and they just need a little encouragement to do so.

24 So as you can see in this slide, FY22, we took in 34 EEO
25 contacts, of which 22 filed an informal complaint. This means that we were

1 able to resolve 36 percent of the contacts without them filing an informal
2 complaint. And of the 22 informal complaints, only 14 filed formal
3 complaints, so we were able to resolve 36 percent of the informal
4 complaints.

5 As time increases, we strive to increase that resolution rate
6 through our customer service where possible. You can also see that the
7 number of contacts have increased through the years, and we attribute that
8 to our increased outreach to the agency through our Lunch and Learns, EEO
9 and diversity training, Commission policy statements, and other proactive
10 outreach.

11 So in this chart, you'll also see that our EEO complaint
12 activity has remained consistent within the past two years and still remains
13 less than one percent of our total workforce with pre-complaints, otherwise
14 known as informal, and less than one percent of our workforce with formal
15 complaints.

16 Next slide, please. So in reviewing the bases raised in
17 our formal complaints for FY22, disability, race, reprisal and retaliation, sex,
18 and age are the most cited, constituting approximately 85 percent of the
19 formal complaint filings. While reprisal and retaliation still remain one of our
20 most asserted bases, generally, those having prior EEO activity or
21 opposition to an employment policy or practice over the past few years, so it
22 should be noted that disability and race are the top two protected bases
23 cited for this reporting period.

24 Compare this to FY21 data where the top two bases were
25 reprisal and religion, followed significantly behind race and age. So this

1 chart reflects all bases cited in a formal complaint, which may include
2 multiple bases.

3 Next slide, please. So this chart reflects all issues cited in
4 a formal complaint, which may include multiple issues for each complaint.
5 So harassment in the workplace is at an all-time high and remains a
6 persistent problem for the federal sector, as reported by the Equal
7 Employment Opportunity Commission. Situations of workplace harassment,
8 otherwise known as hostile work environment, are highly stressful and affect
9 the health of employees in negative ways. It's reported that workplace
10 harassment too often goes unaddressed, where employees who experience
11 harassment fail to report the harassing behavior or file a complaint because
12 they fear disbelief of their claim, inaction of their claim, blame, or social and
13 professional retaliation.

14 However, we continue to work with our partners in
15 OCHCO, OGC, and the Office of the Inspector General to cultivate a civil
16 workplace that's free from all forms of harassing behavior and misconduct,
17 discrimination, and also retaliation. So building resilience and having
18 empathy for others is the first essential step to protecting one's health.

19 Next slide, please. So what do the numbers tell us as a
20 whole? In our analysis, we could say everything is great, we're right down
21 the middle, not too bad or not too good, or we could go a little deeper. If the
22 FEVS addresses attitudes and other data measures' actions, it could be that
23 the data is saying we believe in the principles of DEIA and we believe in
24 ourselves, but we haven't done enough to put it into action. Perhaps our
25 walk lags behind our talk in some areas. And perhaps complaint activity

1 has plateaued because everybody is completely satisfied, or it could be due
2 to uncertainty.

3 We've come to realize how uncertainty and ambiguity have
4 affected our employees in so many ways. Uncertainty and the many forces
5 outside of our control often affect our work-life balance and tends to manifest
6 higher anxiety, depression, stress, and burnout. So this can lead to
7 decreased engagement, lower productivity, increased absenteeism, you
8 know, physical health issues, sense of hopelessness, even declining mental
9 health issues, which can all be drivers for our EEO complaint activity and
10 contribute to higher than normal attrition.

11 So SBCR's role in the resilience of this agency is to be an
12 example. We are here to provide guidance, to assist offices with strategies
13 to address challenges, listen to individuals' concerns, provide support, and
14 provide perspectives.

15 In building a resilient workplace culture, we hope that
16 employees will embody those essential characteristics in this illustration and
17 that we do our part through individual-level employee programs, policies,
18 trainings, and organizational-level approaches that enable them to withstand
19 hardship, dynamic environments, sudden changes, or difficult or stressful
20 situations. So we don't take lightly the confidence that the staff puts in us.
21 We want to continue providing support at all levels in serving as a resource.

22 Next slide, please. So this is a quote from Mary Church
23 Terrell, the well-known African-American activist who championed racial
24 equality and women's suffrage in the late 19th and early 20th century. Her
25 strategy was based on the power of equal opportunities to advance the race

1 and her belief that, as one succeeds, the whole race would be elevated. So
2 her words lifting as we climb began the motto of the National Association of
3 Colored Women.

4 So how do we do this in our agency? We work to lift as
5 we climb through grassroots efforts starting in SBCR to working on various
6 policy statements on EEO, ADR, diversity and inclusion as endorsed by the
7 Chair. And here's some examples of how we lift ourselves and each other
8 to overcome the challenges mentioned earlier to climb the mountain and to
9 advance our programs in the agency's organizational culture: By hosting our
10 EEO diversity training for managers, supervisors, and now team leaders with
11 OGC and OCHCO. We do a number of Lunch and Learns on various EEO
12 and civil rights activities and topics. We host periodic discussions on
13 inclusive diversity strategic plan items with offices and others. We lead the
14 way as ambassadors promoting inclusive language throughout the agency.
15 We share our revised policy guidance on the use of time in EEO complaint
16 process, which is brand new and updated. We provide newly-revised
17 electronic EEO program posters and EEO complaint process flowcharts
18 across the agency and provide limited English proficiency services for the
19 agency. And we're restoring one of our signature programs called
20 DIALOGUE, which stands for Diversity Inclusion Awareness Leading
21 Organization Growth, Understanding, and Engagements, which will be
22 returning in the new year. A lot of words there, I know.

23 Next slide, please. So in closing, I'd like to thank our
24 approximately 200 volunteers, including our committee and resource group
25 members, the NRC's Technical Women's Network, Blacks in Government,

1 EEO counselors, DIALOGUE ambassadors, and inclusive language
2 ambassadors. Many of them are here today and online, as well.
3 Everyday, these amazing volunteers come up with creative and innovative
4 ways to celebrate and appreciate our diversity of which you'll hear more
5 about later.

6 Special thanks to SBCR staff who are my heroes on a daily
7 basis and to Larniece McKoy Moore for her coordination of this briefing.

8 And, finally, I want to thank you, Chair Hanson, for
9 modeling inclusive behavior with your title change from Chairman to Chair,
10 your support for women in STEM internationally and domestically, and your
11 continuous support to our EEO advisory committees and other initiatives.
12 And thank you, Commissioners, for continuously attending and participating
13 in committee events and your expressed interest in DEIA. Indeed, the
14 Commission models the way for the rest of the agency, and we appreciate
15 you.

16 So now I will turn it over to Anthony Briggs.

17 MR. BRIGGS: Thank you, Vonna. Good morning, Chair
18 and Commissioners. I want to begin with something akin to a state of the
19 union address by addressing the state of small business here at the NRC. I
20 believe this is important because it's been a year since our last briefing. We
21 have a new commissioner that has joined us, a familiar face has returned --
22 welcome back -- and small businesses play a vital role in supporting agency
23 operations.

24 First, I want to touch on why small businesses are
25 important to both the economy and the agency. Small businesses create

1 the majority of net new jobs added to the economy, represent many of the
2 risk-takers that innovate and develop new technologies, are essential to
3 maintaining a competitive supplier base where competition can thrive. They
4 dedicate senior management to agency contracts to ensure success and are
5 flexible with the NRC's evolving needs, thereby ensuring agency success in
6 how we carry out our mission.

7 Second, I want to highlight how small businesses are
8 supporting us by showcasing just a few examples of where small businesses
9 are supporting agency operations. Beginning with the top right picture on
10 the slide above, they are maintaining the operations center; they have
11 modernized our ethics gateway system; support the badging office and
12 cardreaders; provide Office 365 training on the tools that can enhance the
13 way we do business; provide multimedia and webcast support; help us carry
14 out the RIC event; and are helping us explore how virtual reality, augmented
15 reality, and mixed reality can benefit the technical training courses.

16 Third, I want to mention what we are doing to help
17 companies that are interested in conducting business with the NRC. The
18 Small Business Program provides really a hands-on approach to helping
19 companies navigate the federal procurement process. We help them
20 market their products and services to the agency, provide resources that aid
21 the business development needs and new entrants to the federal
22 marketplace, and we match company capabilities with NRC prime and
23 subcontract opportunities.

24 Next slide, please. We try to view any challenges we
25 have or the small business community may be facing as an opportunity

1 really to provide solutions. Our passion for what we do really drives this, but
2 we must temper this with a cautiously optimistic viewpoint because some of
3 those challenges are expected to grow. So I highlighted three of the
4 challenges we are facing from a small business perspective that will not
5 deter us but serve to motivate us to design and deliver resilient solutions.

6 First, the better we do with agency small business goal
7 achievements the higher the agency's goals are increased by the Small
8 Business Administration, also known as SBA. This is the agency that is
9 charged with that authority. This has resulted in SBA continuing to move
10 the goal line, and we are approaching assignment of some of the highest
11 goals in the federal government, and achieving those goals is going to
12 become progressively more difficult.

13 Second, we face evolving internal and external stakeholder
14 needs. Internal stakeholders, here I'm referring to really anybody involved
15 directly in the buying process. While their needs have changed as we've
16 transitioned to a majority virtual working environment, adopted new tools
17 under Office 365, hired new staff, and focused our efforts towards innovation
18 and modernization in how we carry out our work. External stakeholders,
19 and now I'm referring to the business community, their needs have also
20 changed as they are requesting additional resources to aid in their search for
21 business opportunities and new entrants are joining the marketplace in
22 record numbers that are unaware of really where to start.

23 Third, removing barriers for small businesses to
24 contracting with the federal government has been a focus on OMB, and they
25 are asking small business offices to do more when it comes to engaging with

1 industry and educating them on how to conduct business with the federal
2 government. Government contracting can appear a daunting task for any
3 business to undertake, especially for companies that have never done it.

4 Next slide, please. So we just discussed some of our
5 challenges, so the question becomes, well, what are we doing about it? So
6 let's talk about three of the things that we are doing that are grounded in
7 innovative solutions and partnerships. First, agency-wide collaboration
8 among the Acquisition Management Division, Office of the General Counsel,
9 the program offices, the Technical Training Center and Regions has been
10 one of our greatest assets. The small business program has positioned
11 itself to really be the easy button when it comes to an agency product or
12 service need. For example, we help agency buyers find capable
13 companies, explore government-wide contracting vehicles, and facilitate
14 streamlined contracting options that can save both time and money. This
15 approach is grounded in our partnership with the Acquisition Management
16 Division. We provide them the support where they need it, thereby adding
17 value; and this really has become the key ingredient to maximizing
18 opportunities for small businesses.

19 Second, adapting to stakeholder needs is critical as we
20 strive towards removing barriers to federal contracting and modernizing the
21 way we do business. Through crowdsourcing efforts, we have found that
22 the biggest barriers to federal contracting are where to start and who can
23 help small businesses find opportunities. And that's really why we
24 developed the help desk support and established vendor counseling
25 sessions, which are now virtual for wider audience reach.

1 We also have dedicated help desk support, and we
2 created this to answer the question “Where do I start?” And then we have
3 vendor counseling sessions that really go into a deeper dive on how to
4 identify prime and subcontract opportunities. We also are continuing to
5 enhance the resources we have available online and are producing an
6 innovation channel that will showcase innovative products and services to
7 view on demand.

8 Third, we've established strategic partnerships with our
9 federal small business office counterparts to explore best practices,
10 benchmark small business goal achievements, and discuss federal laws and
11 procedures that can maximize opportunities for small businesses. For
12 example, we're an active member of the Small Business Procurement
13 Advisory Council, this is led by SBA, and another group that is led by the
14 small business office directors and managers throughout the federal
15 government that meet on a monthly basis.

16 Next slide, please. So what has been the return on
17 investment for some of our work? Well, there are three accomplishments I
18 want to briefly highlight. First, we received an SBA scorecard letter grade of
19 A-plus for fiscal year '21, which is an increase from an A from the preceding
20 year. Now, the scorecard measures the agency's efforts towards achieving
21 prime and subcontract small business goals, as well as compliance,
22 technical assistance, and outreach efforts and activities performed by the
23 small business program. Our fiscal year '22 scorecard is set to be released
24 next summer, as SBA does not typically freeze the data until the following
25 year.

1 Second, we were recognized as one of the top performers
2 in the federal government for achieving no lower than an A on our SBA
3 scorecard for ten consecutive years, and we ranked third in the federal
4 government for overall fiscal year '21 scorecard performance.

5 Finally, in fiscal year '22, which recently ended, I'm happy
6 to report that the agency achieved all five of its small business prime
7 contract goals, including the small, disadvantaged business goal that was
8 significantly increased this past fiscal year, and more than doubled the goal
9 for companies owned by service-disabled veterans and women, as well as
10 companies located in historically underutilized business zones.

11 Now, these accomplishments do not happen by accident.
12 These achievements are a result of a targeted and collaborative effort
13 among all of our partners that we have the pleasure to work with here at the
14 agency. Their support and buy-in is vital to our success and should be
15 commended. Therefore, I want to thank our partners that are here today
16 and that are watching online from the Acquisition Management Division, the
17 Office of General Counsel, the program offices, the Technical Training
18 Center, and Regions. Thank you for working with us to make it happen.
19 Essentially, a collective effort working towards a common goal.

20 That includes my portion of the presentation. I now turn it
21 over to Jack Giessner, Regional Administrator for Region III. Thank you.

22 MR. GIESSNER: Thank you, Tony. Good morning,
23 Chair Hanson and Commissioners. It's my pleasure to be here with you to
24 represent Region III and talk about our initiatives. With me today is Diana
25 Betancourt. Diana is our co-chair for Diversity Management Advisory

1 Committee and also our team leader for Allegations Enforcement. And
2 Dana Bax. Dana is our technical assistant for the Division of Resource
3 Management Administration.

4 I want to share our challenges and the resilience of our
5 people, how we accomplish our mission, and our focus on the future.

6 Next slide, please. Approximately six years ago, Region
7 III leadership engaged the staff and created teams that developed actions to
8 help us work more efficiently and effectively. The teams also focus on
9 further strengthening our culture. Engagement to us meant being together,
10 building relationships in person. The pandemic abruptly changed that in
11 March of 2020 when we went to mandatory telework. We focused on
12 accomplishing the mission, but it looked very different from how we usually
13 conducted business. No in person activities occurred in the region. Our
14 resident inspectors spent less time on site, and we reduced on-site material
15 and reactor inspections. Mission-essential functions, such as conducting
16 operator licensing activities, were completed but were very challenging.

17 Next slide, please. The top picture shows our main
18 conference room which stayed empty for over two years, but we continued to
19 perform inspection activities requiring on-site presence with appropriate
20 precautions. At the bottom left, Julie Winslow from NRR and Kevin Barclay
21 from Region III supported a special inspection team at Davis-Besse. That
22 resulted in a white finding related to their emergency diesel generators.

23 At the bottom right, Sara Forster on a nuclear materials
24 inspection conducts independent radiological measurements in a University
25 of Missouri building.

1 Next slide, please. As I noted, some regional functions
2 required in-person presence. However, we were forced to change our
3 business processes to accomplish much of our work remotely. At the top,
4 Ming Luo, one of our IT specialists, is working remotely supporting a Perry
5 Nuclear Plant exercise, not from the incident response center. At bottom,
6 Ryan Craffey is working remotely conducting a material inspection.

7 Next slide, please. Our day-to-day engagement for the
8 majority of our people shifted from in-person discussions, hall chatter, coffee
9 klatches, to, well that. And we're used to it. We're proficient at using
10 Teams.

11 In addition to the challenges brought upon us by the
12 pandemic, there were other challenges. Next slide, please. Although not
13 NRC-mission related issues, outside events occurred that really impacted
14 us, as well as our country. The killing of George Floyd and violence
15 experienced by black people, Asian Americans, and Jewish people, as well
16 as the January 6th attack on the Capitol, had a profound impact on us. The
17 challenge of these events in a COVID environment made it especially
18 difficult to make connections, to hear each other, and to understand and
19 appreciate what people were going through. We needed to create space for
20 people to share and learn.

21 Next slide, please. We made it a priority to be connected,
22 albeit remotely, to educate ourselves and hear one another. We held
23 unconscious bias workshops and aimed at increasing awareness about
24 ourselves, realizing we all have biases, and our responsibility in evaluating
25 and adjusting our behaviors, as needed, to create a respectful work

1 environment.

2 The outcome of these sessions was a development of a
3 Region III diversity and inclusion statement and our norms. I'll share those
4 in an upcoming slide. We also held open forums to provide an opportunity
5 for us to express our thoughts and views on the social unrest that was
6 occurring. Some discussions were very sensitive, and I appreciate SBCR
7 supporting us with facilitators. Some people shared their selves, and it was
8 one of the most touching and inspiring times that I experienced.

9 Next slide, please. Here's our diversity and inclusion
10 statement. To me, it's inspiring. Let me highlight three things. First, the
11 key item to create a safe environment is the acceptance of an individual's
12 uniqueness, being respectful. Second, my most important message is that
13 the mission is accomplished most effectively when diversity and inclusion
14 are present. Our organizational health is a measure of how well we relate
15 to one another. Some people feel that culture and diversity are separate
16 from the mission. I don't believe this is true. When people are included
17 and when we have diverse perspectives, we best accomplish the mission.
18 Finally, building meaningful relationships and sharing perspectives is
19 enduring and has a positive impact on everyone.

20 Next slide, please. These are the Region III norms in a
21 visual representation. These behaviors are linked to our NRC values and
22 with attributes from our speed-of-trust training. With these norms, we
23 continue our journey.

24 Next slide, please. Resilience means adapting and
25 moving forward during these challenging times while still accomplishing the

1 mission. Reentry is moving forward. We are still developing the new
2 normal, and we will work with the EDO and senior leadership and our union
3 partners to implement the appropriate recommendations from the HEART
4 and telework working groups.

5 In addition to our reentry earlier this year, Region III is
6 heavily focused on a couple of other items: implementing our reorganization,
7 moving from three technical divisions to two technical divisions, and currently
8 working with GSA and the Office of Administration to move our office
9 hopefully in 2023.

10 Next slide, please. Since the Midwest COVID
11 transmissions were high for the majority of spring and summer, coming
12 together was difficult, but we balanced in-person activities with the staff's
13 comfort of coming together. In May of 2022, the Region III Veterans
14 Employee Resource Group collected items for a nonprofit organization called
15 PAWWS, Paws Assisting Wounded WarriorS. They provide service dogs
16 for veterans with PTSD. Here, Gail Christoffer Baruch, our Veterans liaison,
17 is with a furry friend. Our in-person groups are currently smaller than
18 pre-COVID, but we are getting together.

19 Next slide, please. We continue to support diversity and
20 inclusion activities. Here I am with Laura Cender, our Pride Alliance
21 Advisory Committee liaison, next to our Pride flag in June of 2022. We
22 were also proud to display the Juneteenth flag in Region III, recognizing that
23 June 19th marks a major day of significance in American history.

24 Next slide, please. Here's the picture, the first picture
25 from the Region III Hispanic heritage event in October '22. It's the first

1 in-person diversity celebration since the pandemic started. We have less
2 people attending, as I said. However, all are welcome at our table in person
3 or virtually.

4 Next slide, please. This is my favorite slide because
5 being resilient means you have to adapt, sometimes quickly, to current
6 changing environment. Here's a coffee klatch that was supposed to be
7 done in person, but, because the Midwest shifted to high, we shifted to a
8 hybrid event. Some people in the office with donuts and coffee, masked
9 and distanced, some remote. We had small virtual and in-person
10 discussions, getting to know each other with topics as simple as what's your
11 favorite movie of all time and why.

12 So where do we go from here? Next slide, please. We
13 have three groups working together focusing on desired culture and
14 inclusive environment. There are the desired culture team, engagement
15 council, and our Diversity Management Advisory Committee, which we call
16 DMAC.

17 Next slide, please. We are working together building our
18 new vision and goals. Our draft vision focuses on an energized team and a
19 high-trust environment with shared norms where diversity and inclusion are
20 essential to the mission and our goals focus on continuing our risk-informed
21 journey and building the future with our people.

22 Next slide, please. Finally, our people. The first picture
23 was taken in 2019 pre-COVID. We haven't had a group that big in our
24 office since. Of that group, in 2019, 20 percent are no longer with the
25 region. The two other pictures are new employees during their oaths of

1 office. I'm excited to say these new folks, over 40 since the pandemic
2 started, are energized and ready to take part in our engagement journey.

3 Thank you. I'll now turn it over to MJ.

4 MS. ROSS-LEE: Thank you, Jack. Good morning,
5 Chair, Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to brief you today on
6 the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation's activities, which are focusing on
7 supporting diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility, highlighting how we
8 are all different but working together on the same mission.

9 Next slide, please. NRR aims to foster a more trusting,
10 vibrant, diverse, equity, inclusive, and accessible environment. We
11 recognize that improving our diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
12 moves us towards our ideal culture and achieves outcomes that enable us to
13 successfully accomplish our mission. To support the established goals,
14 NRR has developed a diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility workplace
15 plan, which using a phased approach that utilizes transformative thinking
16 and active engagement by all NRR staff.

17 The first phase was to assess and facilitate by engaging
18 leadership. The second was to build trust by engaging staff. The third is a
19 continuous commitment to the goals set forth by the office.

20 In addition, NRR has created a glossary of terms and
21 methods for dialogue, including identifying dialogue ambassadors
22 throughout the office, which can be found on the diversity, equity, inclusion,
23 and accessibility SharePoint page to complement this plan.

24 We have shared all of this with the NRR staff and
25 frequently discuss in various forums. The site has had almost 350 views.

1 Next slide, please. So what actions has NRR done this
2 past year to put the plan into action? Focusing on the key steps of
3 awareness, participation, and engagement. For awareness, over the past
4 two years, NRR has held quarterly town hall type discussions for staff on
5 topics such as diversity in the workplace, inclusion in the workplace,
6 multi-generational teams, microaggressions, gaslighting, and a panel for
7 discussion on exploring diversity.

8 In the area of participation, these discussions are widely
9 attended by NRR staff, typically over 200 attendees, and they have resulted
10 in lively and productive discussions among staff there. In engagement,
11 NRR currently has three SES serving as executive sponsors and 36 staff as
12 members on the various agency advisory and affinity groups, such as the
13 Advisory Committee for Employees with Disabilities, Asian-Pacific American
14 Advisory Committee, Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee, and
15 Blacks in Government.

16 We have proactively sought out members of these various
17 groups to come to multiple NRR leadership meetings and all-hand meetings
18 to provide an awareness of these different groups, share opportunities for
19 participation, and solicit engagement by the staff.

20 Next slide, please. So what does success look like? For
21 NRR, we continue to focus on messaging and behaviors that reflect the
22 principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. NRR strives to
23 incorporate these principles into the fabric of the office, weaving them into
24 recruitment, succession planning, and retention activities. It takes all three
25 of these to keep the knot strong and together.

1 For recruitment, there were 12 different NRR staff this past
2 year which supported recruiting at 12 various events, three of which were
3 focused on minority-serving institutions. Approximately one-half of the staff
4 hired last year in NRR were from minority groups, and a third of those were
5 external hires. In addition, NRR has taken a leadership role in the hiring
6 initiative to recruit and employ at NRC.

7 The NRR leadership teams meets at least twice a year for
8 focused discussion on succession planning, making sure we continue to
9 align on our goals of a diverse and inclusive leadership team. Frequently,
10 our monthly strategy meetings include a specific discussion on how we are
11 doing with retaining the diverse workforce we currently have, ensuring equity
12 on opportunities for all staff. One example, NRR has looked to expand the
13 diversity of staff who are engaged in international activities, utilizing virtual
14 learning opportunities to ensure we have a sustainable and diverse pipeline
15 to support the activities.

16 We recognize that this is an ongoing effort. There is no
17 point in which we can say we are done, and these efforts within the office will
18 continue.

19 Thank you. I will now turn it over to Amanda Black, Chair
20 of the Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee.

21 MS. BLACK: Thank you, MJ. Good morning,
22 Commissioners. I'm honored to speak to you today on behalf of the DMAC
23 as the Chair of the Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee. At the
24 NRC, the DMAC represents the collective voice of nine volunteer groups,
25 eight EEO advisory committees, and one employee resource group. They

1 are the Advisory Committee for African Americans, the Advisory Committee
2 for Employees with Disabilities, the Asian-Pacific American Advisory
3 Committee, Diversity Advisory Committee on Ageism, Federal Women's
4 Program Advisory Committee, Hispanic Employment Program Advisory
5 Committee, the Native American Advisory Committee, the NRC Pride
6 Alliance Advisory Committee, and the Veterans Employee Resource Group.

7 The DMAC works with SBCR to support recruitment,
8 professional development, retention, and diversity as stated in the agency's
9 inclusive diversity strategic plan.

10 The NRC also has two affinity groups that support the
11 DMAC in its efforts. They are the NRC Blacks in Government and the NRC
12 Technical Women's Network.

13 This statement communicates the joint perspective of the
14 DMAC members on matters of great interest to our constituencies and the
15 NRC staff at large. This year, we focused on representation in celebration
16 of all equities and communities, career developmental opportunities, and
17 recruitment.

18 Next slide, please. The advisory committee and resource
19 groups leaned on one another in several capacities with the goal of making
20 sure all NRC employees felt represented and their voices heard. We
21 focused on expanding collaborative efforts with agency initiative teams,
22 employee resource groups, and affinity groups to foster an inclusive
23 workplace environment as the agency transforms into a modern
24 risk-informed regulator.

25 The agency has continued to adapt to changing protocols

1 and procedures by utilizing the tools available to thrive in a new work
2 environment. Despite technical challenges, the advisory committees and
3 the resource groups saw success with virtual events and presentations of
4 interest to all NRC employees.

5 In 2022, thanks to the hardworking efforts of the NRC
6 Pride Alliance Advisory Committee, we celebrated for the first time in NRC
7 history the flying of the Pride flag in front of the NRC headquarters building in
8 honor of Pride Month. The NRC Pride Alliance Advisory Committee further
9 led agency efforts in the implementation of inclusive language, including
10 pronoun use, agency-wide.

11 Next slide, please. This year, the Advisory Committee for
12 African Americans and Blacks in Government spearheaded a flag-raising
13 event in recognition and celebration of Juneteenth with the rising of a
14 Juneteenth flag for the first time in NRC history. The Asian-Pacific
15 American Advisory Committee launched its first new series of CULINASIA
16 film discussions that will provide an avenue to explore the importance of
17 Asian cuisine on the current and future American culture while recognizing
18 anti-Asian racism and discrimination.

19 The Advisory Committee for Employees with Disabilities
20 held ongoing awareness events to educate the NRC about various
21 disabilities, such as neurodiversity and how to hire and advance employees
22 with disabilities in Powered by Diversity: Hiring and Advancing Employees
23 with Disabilities.

24 In recognition of national days of celebration, the
25 committees held several events. The Hispanic Employment Program

1 Advisory Committee hosted its first hybrid Hispanic Heritage Month
2 celebration with participation from Commissioners and an inspiring keynote
3 address by Congressman Salud Carbajal. The Diversity Advisory
4 Committee on Ageism celebrated Older Americans Month with Age My Way:
5 Staying Involved with Your Community and Working as You Get Older, in
6 collaboration with American Association for Retired Persons.

7 The Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee
8 gathered in recognition of the Women's Equality Day with a presentation on
9 inspirational women of 2022 and connected with participants over shared
10 experiences. And in honor of National K9 Veterans Day and the Veterans
11 Employee Resource Group sponsored a donation drive for the Montgomery
12 County Humane Society.

13 In 2023, we look forward to continuing our support of the
14 agency in maintaining a diverse and inclusive workforce and providing a
15 forum for dialogue on issues that are important to the principles of diversity
16 and inclusion.

17 Next slide, please. The advisory committees and
18 resource group are aware of the factors presently limiting recruitment,
19 retention, and promotions. We seek to ensure that women, persons with
20 disability, people of color, and all individuals regardless of their age, sexual
21 orientation, or gender identity are receiving the developmental opportunities
22 to become future leaders of the agency.

23 In 2022, the NRC Technical Women's Network held an
24 interactive workshop designed to help employees prepare high-quality
25 narratives for career opportunities by applying the challenge, context, action,

1 result, or the CCAR, writing model. The Advisory Committee for Employees
2 with Disabilities also developed a one-pager for NRC supervisors to expand
3 their hiring circles in USAJOBS, which included paths for individuals with
4 disabilities, veterans, military spouses, Native Americans, recent graduates,
5 and federal employees. As the NRC continues to grow and expand, the
6 committees and resource group will continue to support recruitment and
7 retention efforts with participation in hiring and community outreach.

8 We also look to engage with management to see that
9 performance-related decisions are based on non-discriminatory factors. We
10 encourage NRC to continue building and maintaining relationships with
11 minority-serving institutions and other organizations representing minorities
12 and persons with disabilities to ensure that there's a diverse pathway for
13 professionals to make up future generations of agency staff.

14 In conclusion, let me express my appreciation and
15 gratitude for your continued participation and support of the various diversity
16 and inclusion efforts throughout the agency.

17 Next, you will hear from Mary Lamary, Chief Human
18 Capital Officer. Thank you.

19 MS. LAMARY: Thank you. Good morning, Chair
20 Hanson, Commissioners, NRC workforce, and members of the public joining
21 us today. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the
22 agency's hiring efforts. I'm hopeful my presentation will make clear
23 OCHCO's commitment to best positioning the agency to meet its important
24 safety and security mission both now and well into the future by building a
25 diverse and skilled workforce.

1 Next slide, please. The Office of the Chief Human Capital
2 Officer employed several key strategies as we work diligently to meet the
3 aspirational hiring goals identified in the EDO's FY 2022 hiring tasker. We
4 work closely with office and regional senior management and hiring
5 managers to identify and prioritize critical hiring positions; ways to expedite
6 the hiring process.

7 For example, when feasible, we included multiple positions
8 in a single job announcement, proactively initiated recruitment efforts for
9 positions expected to be vacant over the next 6 to 12 months, and reinforced
10 the need for hiring officials to prioritize reviewing candidate packages and
11 make timely hiring decisions. Additionally, we made a concerted effort to
12 increase external job announcements to widen potential candidate pools.

13 As a result of these efforts, the agency was able to fully
14 onboard 206 new employees with approximately 65 additional hires in
15 various stages of completing the hiring process at the end of FY22. This is
16 in addition to completing over a 150 internal movements through promotions
17 or career development reassignments of current employees.

18 I'd like to share some demographic information highlighting
19 the impact of these new hires on the NRC workforce.

20 Next slide, please. Ethnicity and race demographics for
21 FY22 show an increase of 3.7 percent over FY21 from 37.4 percent to 41.1
22 percent of hires self-designated as minority. The percentage of FY22 hires
23 with self-identified disabilities was 23.3 percent, which is almost 15 percent
24 above NRC's current onboard workforce of 8.4 percent.

25 Next slide, please. In other employment categories,

1 veteran status and gender, the numbers are holding relatively steady with
2 respect to the onboard workforce in these areas. 21.9 percent of FY22
3 hires were veterans, which is fairly consistent with 20.5 percent of onboard
4 veterans. 38.5 percent of FY22 hires identified as female, which is slightly
5 below our existing onboard female employment of 40.4 percent.

6 I'd like to note that OCHCO remains cognizant of the need
7 to expand options and reconsider how best to collect information in the
8 future, such that it is inclusive of those individuals who identify as non-binary
9 or who do not identify with a male or female gender category at all.

10 With respect to age, the average age of FY22 hires was
11 36. Many of these are mid-career hires who can hit the ground running and
12 enhance the agency's identified critical skill sets. This also complements
13 our entry-level hiring efforts, which, over the longer term, will help to
14 normalize the workforce and offset any future waves in attrition due to
15 retirement. Yet, we will continue to rely on the more seasoned members of
16 the workforce as they are critical to ensuring the agency continues to fulfill its
17 important mission. Moreover, they are instrumental in helping the new and
18 mid-career hires be successful through knowledge management and transfer
19 activities, such as mentoring and on-the-job training.

20 Next slide, please. Our aspirational hiring target for FY
21 2023 is 400 external hires. This target was identified using a number of
22 factors, including the allocation for full-time equivalent employees, critical
23 needs, projected attrition rates, and results from an agency-wide data call for
24 hiring. I stress that close, timely, and sustained coordination and
25 collaboration between OCHCO and all NRC offices and regions is essential

1 to attaining this goal.

2 Next slide, please. To achieve our aspirational hiring goal
3 of FY 2023, we have identified crucial next steps that will set the agency on
4 the path to success. First, OCHCO is working with the Human Capital
5 Council to identify and share criteria with the offices and regions to assist
6 them in prioritizing hiring needs. Then the HCC will collectively review
7 these prioritized hiring needs and develop a single agency-wide prioritized
8 hiring strategy. This will provide for agency-wide alignment and
9 transparency around hiring priorities and allow for the best use of resources.

10 Second, OCHCO will continue to work with #hireNRC.
11 This partnership has allowed OCHCO to benefit from office and
12 regional-level insight and assistance to improve the agency's recruitment
13 and hiring processes. Third, within OCHCO, we realize more can be done
14 to improve the hiring process, the customer services we are providing to
15 offices and regions, and our interactions with our external candidates. A
16 targeted enhancement of our communication efforts, streamlining processes,
17 and employing improved technologies, increasing our outreach and
18 engagement will serve as our springboard for this improvement. To do this,
19 we are working with the Office of the Executive Director for Operations to
20 identify and secure resources necessary for OCHCO to begin undertaking
21 these important actions in the immediate future.

22 Next, to be competitive in recruiting external candidates,
23 the agency needs to modernize its approach to marketing, outreach, and
24 recruitment activities. This includes updating our marketing materials to be
25 more current and adopting recruitment applications that employ data

1 analytics to help us be more strategic and informed in our outreach and
2 recruitment activities.

3 Lastly, as an agency, we must simultaneously focus on
4 retention and career development and enhancement efforts. Our current
5 workforce is the backbone of our agency and an invaluable asset which
6 must be sustained, supported, and nurtured.

7 Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today. I
8 turn it back over to Dan Dorman.

9 MR. DORMAN: Thank you, Mary. I'd like to close out
10 today's remarks by expressing my gratitude to the staff and management in
11 the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights and the Office of the Chief
12 Human Capital Officer, the members of our EEO advisory committees and
13 affinity groups, and staff and management all over the agency who model
14 our organizational values every single day. I'm confident, with their support
15 and leadership, we will continue to enhance our resilience, strengthen our
16 organizational health, and ensure that the NRC is an employer of choice for
17 current and future employees while steadfastly achieving our mission with
18 excellence.

19 This concludes our presentation. We look forward to your
20 questions.

21 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Dan. Just before we get
22 going with questions, I neglected to note at the beginning that Commissioner
23 Baran is with us. He's online out there somewhere over the internet and, as
24 we get through questions here, we'll include him in due course.

25 So we'll begin this morning with Commissioner Caputo.

1 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Good morning. So it goes
2 without saying how important these issues are to the agency, but I'm going
3 to say it anyway and I just did. So it takes a significant amount of effort to
4 prepare for today's meeting, but it takes far more effort to work on these
5 issues all the way through the years. So thanks to everyone who both
6 contributed their efforts all year and also in preparing for today's meeting.

7 Stephen Covey says that strength lies in differences, not
8 similarities. So thanks to everyone in particular who works to strengthen the
9 agency through diversity and inclusion.

10 Since returning to the agency, I've experienced situations
11 that have caused me to reflect on inclusion in particular. So I'm going to
12 relay some of my experiences and perspectives as a woman in a technical
13 field and a recent observation. So for those of you turning in from Region II,
14 yes, you heard it first.

15 When I graduated and started working, I often felt treated
16 like that young girl fresh out of college who doesn't know anything. And I
17 shrugged it off because they had a point, and I figured it wouldn't always be
18 the case and that it would wane as I gained experience and progressed in
19 my career. But it didn't, and, nonetheless, I plowed forward with my career
20 goals, just choosing to ignore it and not let it stand in my way.

21 What struck me recently is that I'm still wrestling with these
22 situations at this point in my career, and, if I am, other women are, as well.
23 And it's incumbent upon me, I think, at this point in my career, to really begin
24 to sort of wrestle with these issues and do what I can to impart change for
25 the better. Women have faced challenges as long as they've been in the

1 workplace, and certainly things are a lot better now than they were years ago
2 or certainly for our mothers in the workplace. But there's still a ways to go,
3 and I think it's time for me to do my part to bring positive change.

4 This is where I'm also going to insert a strong caveat. I
5 don't think my struggles, well, I think my struggles have been a fraction of
6 what some women have been faced with. So what I'm going to say today I
7 want in no way to trivialize women out there who have faced much tougher
8 situations than I have.

9 But I will also insert a caution here to leaders in the
10 agency. Twice in my career, these dynamics have influenced my decision
11 to leave a position, once solely as my reason to leave a position and the
12 other time it was a strong contributing factor. So to the extent that women
13 are struggling with these issues, they can just leave. And that, I think,
14 should be a reason for all of us to sort of focus on doing what we can in
15 terms of inclusion to make our workplace more inclusive because we want to
16 preserve those talents and contributions.

17 One of the strongest drivers of job satisfaction and
18 engagement is for people to feel appreciated, and I believe the extent to
19 which people feel appreciated is strongly influenced by how inclusive we are.

20 So I'm going to take a moment to share an anecdote about a meeting I was
21 in a few months ago. It was a meeting about this size. There were three
22 other women other than me, and we had had a brief PowerPoint. This was
23 sort of an open discussion Q&A session. A woman sort of across the table
24 where Jack is roughly started to speak up. She got interrupted. I noticed
25 it, I looked at her, she looked at me, no expression. Waited a few more

1 minutes. There was a break in the conversation. I looked at her expecting
2 her to jump in. She tried to jump in, and she got cut off again. She gave
3 me a little knowing smile, I gave her a little knowing smile back. And I
4 thought to myself, oh, fine, I'll interrupt. I grew up in a boisterous family
5 and, as I said to Region II, I know the fine art and poor manners of
6 interrupting. I'm going to interject, and I'm going to give her an opportunity
7 because I want to hear what she has to say.

8 So I tried to jump into the conversation. I got cut off. I
9 gave her a surprised look. She looked equally surprised back at me. So I
10 waited a minute and jumped in a little more forcefully. And she, of course,
11 had a wonderful, insightful contribution to the discussion, but what I was left
12 with was the level of effort that it took to elicit that contribution and the
13 dynamic that women, I think in particular, face in these situations where
14 every one of those situations is fraught with a judgment call. Do you push
15 forward and speak up and risk being labeled as aggressive, right, or do you
16 play it safe, step back and sit quietly? And that, I think, really resonated
17 with me as a woman, speaking from my own personal perspective; but it's
18 also something that I'm guessing people of color and gender identities also
19 struggle with and, to some extent, people that are simply just shy.

20 So this, to me, is a very subtle and absolutely crucial
21 aspect of inclusion. How hard is it for people to contribute and be heard.
22 And I don't have a simple answer here because I don't think this is
23 something that's just solved with a program or a training because I think this
24 is all about how we, as individuals, interact in the workplace and how we
25 treat each other and interact with each other.

1 So this is certainly something that I'm going to think on
2 more going forward, but I will share one thing that I'm doing, trying to do on a
3 personal level. When you're going into a meeting, it's very easy to focus on
4 the substance of the meeting, who's going to be there, what are they going
5 to say, what are you going to say. So I'm trying to make a point, of
6 reminding myself to be intentionally aware, consciously looking for and being
7 alert for those moments. They can be incredibly subtle and fleeting, but I
8 want to watch for those because that really, you know, it's so easy to just
9 pause for a minute and say, I'm sorry, MJ, you were about to say something,
10 what was that? It's very easy, simple really, as long as you're alert for it.
11 The people in that meeting I'm sure were probably completely oblivious and
12 I'm sure most, if not all, would be completely mortified that that situation
13 played out.

14 So in missing those moments, we're missing out on
15 someone's thinking. Maybe it was brilliant, maybe it wasn't. But if it wasn't,
16 it might be the next time. And if this person is encouraged and feels valued,
17 they'll keep making those contributions, and you never know when you're
18 going to get some brilliant nugget that's really an important contribution to
19 the mission of the agency.

20 So if we make it too hard for people to make those
21 contributions, they're going to feel like their voices aren't heard, don't matter,
22 and that they personally aren't valued. And not only could we risk losing
23 their contributions in any other situations, we could lose them from our
24 workforce.

25 So this is where I think inclusion goes beyond a principle

1 and really into practice. And like I said, there's no simple answer here, but I
2 do want to just give a special thank you to everyone who actively contributes
3 to improving inclusion here at the NRC, not just at a programmatic level but
4 also on a personal level, because I think it really is crucial to the future of the
5 agency.

6 So with that, I want to say, Amanda, thank you very much
7 for being here representing the advisory committees. And I'm going to say,
8 not to the exclusion of the other groups, but more in keeping with, you know,
9 speaking about what you know, I'd like to talk at some point with FWPAC
10 leadership just to learn more what I can do to engage on a personal level
11 and just strategies for the workplace to make it more inclusive for women
12 and, you know, from there, probably I would assume a lot of strategies that I
13 could probably employ with regard to our other groups, as well.

14 So I'm also, setting that aside, now that I have basically
15 followed on former Chairman Kristine Svinicki's strategy sometimes of
16 speaking more than asking a question, I do have one question and I have a
17 question for Mary. So I recognize the opportunity to bring in outside talent
18 to meet the needs that we're facing is important and that a lot of external
19 hiring is necessary, but I'd like to understand better what effort has been
20 made to upscale our current employees providing development opportunities
21 and, in some case, turning them into new positions where we know we need
22 workload. And it may take developmental training, it may be, I think, more
23 intensive to do that, rather than simply bringing in an external hire. But I'd
24 like to know how you balance that.

25 MS. LAMARY: Thank you. So there's actually quite a bit

1 going on. We are working very hard to grow our own and be able to
2 promote from within. We're on our second round of NРАН apprentices now.
3 We are also doing our, we just did our CDP. Seventy-five percent of the
4 candidates into the CDP were internal candidates, so we're growing our own
5 there.

6 Our attrition rate, we know that we lose about 200 or so
7 every year. Sixty-percent last year, sixty percent of our attrition was at the
8 14 and 15 level.

9 And so, in terms of hiring from the outside, we've talked a
10 lot about external hiring, 12 percent of external hires were at the 14 or 15
11 level. The rest we're bringing them in and we're growing. So that means
12 that that 60 percent that were vacated were filled from within, we're
13 promoting. As I said, we processed over 150 actions internally.

14 We're also working on our rotations and details. Thank
15 you to Dan. He allowed us to do from where your current duty station is, so
16 folks who are accepted into a detail or a rotation now, if the work supports it,
17 do not have to relocate. So if somebody from a region was to do a detail
18 here at the headquarters to get headquarters experience, they could do it
19 from their current official duty station instead of having to come here.

20 So we're doing a lot of different things.

21 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: All right. Thank you.

22 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Caputo.
23 Commissioner Crowell.

24 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
25 Thank you to all the presenters for everything you've offered today. This is

1 an incredibly important topic. As the newest commissioner, I'm still getting
2 acquainted with many of the policies and programs we have around the
3 agency and attempting to determine what's working well and what needs
4 improvement, what's being overlooked. I also want to say thank you to
5 Commissioner Caputo. Sometimes, sharing an experience can be much
6 better than asking a series of questions, and I think that was very valuable to
7 hear from her perspective. So I appreciate her taking the time to do that.

8 These are difficult issues, but they're important to get right.

9 In my view, the worst scenario is to talk a big game and then not follow
10 through. I think that has the most harmful impact on workforce culture and
11 would be harmful going forward. That being said, as we work as a family,
12 we will know that this is going to be an iterative process to get this right and
13 good intentions can go a long way if they truly are good intentions and result
14 in actions. And it starts from the top. This side of the table, as well as the
15 senior leadership on the other side of the table and throughout the agency,
16 we have to walk the walk.

17 That being said, the input from the balance of the agency
18 is the most important in my mind because they're the ones who are going to
19 inherit these policies and this agency culture, and our job at the top is to be
20 supportive of getting input from them, making sure that we're staying within
21 the bounds of any applicable laws and regulations, meeting our safety
22 mandate; but beyond that, I really think that their input should be dictating
23 how we move forward on these topics, and I want all of our senior leadership
24 to keep that in mind as we go forward.

25 I have a handful of questions. I'll see what I can get

1 through here. I know we're all working on, you know, improving our data
2 metrics and analyzing the data that we have. And in reviewing the very
3 good reports as part of this presentation and that are done at the agency, it
4 seems to be there's some weaknesses in the data analysis being flagged as
5 either missing or inaccurate such that the data couldn't be analyzed. And I
6 know that the EEOC noted that, as well.

7 Is there an effort to improve the collection of data and,
8 therefore, be able to analyze it and inform our policies?

9 MS. ORDAZ: Absolutely. Great question. And thank
10 you for reading the MD-715 report because that's where that came from
11 where we had to acknowledge that we had some inaccuracies for lack of
12 data. And we're working very close with our partners in OCHCO on that
13 very same thing. Your comments from a few years ago, Commissioner
14 Caputo, resonated with us, too, on data, so we've been hard driving on the
15 data. Lots of discussions. Mary can speak to it also because the systems
16 that the data comes through for workflow, applicant data, comes through her
17 systems that she's working on in 2023 and is committed to addressing that
18 so we can get better data and better statistics that go into our report.

19 Mary, would you like to add anything?

20 MS. LAMARY: Thank you. Yes, we are working on that.

21 As I said, one of the things that we're working on aggressively now, we've
22 asked the EDO for some resources, is to improve platforms for data
23 analytics. We think it will also inform the effectiveness of our outreach and
24 our recruitment activities.

25 So I think it will help us across the board in terms of being

1 able to satisfy reporting requirements, as well as inform our own internal
2 activities.

3 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you. And that
4 helps lead me to another question that I think, Mary, will end up being for
5 you because you mentioned it. But on gender equity, I know that the
6 government-wide metrics are largely binary, male/female, and I'm wondering
7 if we're doing anything internally or have received any guidance on how to
8 improve the non-binary metrics and inclusion for individuals who identify as
9 non-binary. I know that may require getting a little bit ahead of where the
10 larger federal government is, but is there anything happening there? I know
11 you said you're cognizant of it in your presentation, but, beyond that, are we
12 able to do anything?

13 MS. LAMARY: Yes, sir. So, currently, we're not because
14 there's not a metric to collect it. So we would be ahead. We would be
15 leaning forward, and we plan to do that in terms of placing metrics and
16 measures in place to collect that data; but it's currently not one of the data
17 points that is in the official data set. So we'll be creating our own.

18 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay. That's great to
19 hear. I'm going to stick with you for a second, Mary, because you're one of
20 the earliest people I got to meet at the agency, and I think you are a true
21 professional and expert in your field, and I really appreciate what you do.

22 MS. LAMARY: There are many of us here, sir.

23 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: That being said, you can
24 only be as effective as the policies and directions you receive and the
25 resources you have from a budget and human resource perspective. Do

1 you have what you need to help the NRC walk the walk?

2 MS. LAMARY: I think we're on a good path to getting
3 there. We did not when we started the FY22 hiring initiative. You know
4 that this agency was not doing a lot of hiring other than trying to maintain its
5 equilibrium, and so we began aggressively last year. We have a lot of
6 lessons learned, we made some requests, we received them. We have met
7 with the EDO's office. We did a lot of analysis internally within OCHCO.
8 We talked to our offices and regional customers. We understand what they
9 need, and we went knocking. So we have a pretty good commitment, so I
10 think we're going to get there; yes, sir.

11 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay. Thank you. And
12 then I don't know if this next question is going to be for you or Dan or one of
13 you to designate, but I was reviewing some of the workforce analysis and
14 data regarding internal promotions and the equity with regard to internal
15 promotions and noted that for GG-13s, 14s, and 15s and equivalent
16 positions, for almost a hundred of those promotions no interviews were given
17 for those promotions. And I can't say from the data whether that was right
18 or wrong, but it makes me a little bit concerned that it lends itself to some of
19 the feeling out there that there's bias in the promotion process and favoritism
20 that happens, and I want to know if anybody on the panel here can speak to
21 that.

22 MR. DORMAN: I'll start with just a general expectation.
23 The merit process, a selecting official gets from HR a pool of candidates that
24 have been screened and identified to be the best-qualified candidates. And
25 sometimes you get a cert that has a half a dozen candidates on it and you

1 don't know some of them, and the normal expectation is you're going to
2 interview everybody on the cert. So I think that number is stark to me, the
3 hundred that you cited, because, generally, I would expect when a selection
4 is made without having interviewed, it's generally a very small cert and
5 people that are well known to the selecting official. So all of them are well
6 known to the selecting official.

7 So a general expectation would be interviews, so that
8 number is striking to me. Mary, if you have anything to add on that.

9 MS. LAMARY: I think you've hit on the key point, and that
10 is you make your selections from the available candidate pool. So I think
11 we have to step a little further back and increase the diversity. We need
12 greater horizontal diversity that will feed the vertical diversity in the agency.
13 So right now, that's where the available candidate pool is, that's from where
14 we select. So it's incumbent on us, and that's why I was keying on the data
15 for where we left with their losses at the 14 and 15 level versus the hires at
16 the 14 and 15 level from outside. That will allow us to grow more internally
17 so that the available candidate pool becomes more diverse at the higher
18 grades.

19 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I think it's important to
20 keep a very close eye on this because, as we move into a new hybrid work
21 environment or dynamic work environment, that has the potential to get
22 acutely worse quickly, and we need to make sure we're now allowing that to
23 happen.

24 One more question. I'm going to take a left turn here and
25 turn to Tony, I think, as the right person for this. In our efforts to do well in

1 the recruitment and use of small businesses, there often comes a tipping
2 point that gets a little bit tricky where small businesses who are successful in
3 navigating the process and doing well with contracts either as prime or subs,
4 your success often starts to walk you towards the path of not being a small
5 business anymore. And in an effort to continue to be a small business,
6 sometimes you'll see entities keep their metrics low, their number of staff
7 and things like that, so that they can maintain the small business
8 qualification. But they're doing more with less in that dynamic.

9 How do you account for that kind of tipping point when
10 successful small businesses start to get stretched too thin because they
11 want to stay in that threshold?

12 MR. BRIGGS: Great question. We've actually had that
13 happen on one of our largest contracts at the agency. One of the greatest
14 creditors to our small disadvantaged business performance was a company
15 that, in fact, grew large on a multi-year contract. There's really nothing you
16 can do after that fact.

17 So we've been trying to focus on bringing new entrants into
18 the federal marketplace. That's why I mentioned we established the help
19 desk support to answer the where do I start question for a lot of new
20 companies coming in because we will have companies grow, and that is
21 incredibly difficult to manage.

22 One of the things we encourage for companies that are
23 starting to grow, start mentoring smaller companies. There is something
24 called a mentor protégé agreement that is run by SBA that actually helps
25 that, so the small business that eventually grows large will help out the

1 smaller companies with their experience and resources. And they're able to
2 compete on small business contracts.

3 There's also another mechanism called the joint venture
4 agreement, so that's a small business and a large business getting together,
5 forming a new legal entity that is, in fact, considered small, and they can, in
6 some cases, share resources.

7 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you. It's
8 reassuring that you have your eye on that topic and are keeping track of it,
9 and I very much appreciated your presentation. You seem like you've got,
10 you're very well aware of your job and you're doing it well. So thank you for
11 that.

12 MR. BRIGGS: Thank you. Appreciate it.

13 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

14 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Crowell.
15 Thank you all again for being here. I think this is a really good discussion.
16 This is certainly one of my favorite meetings of the year to get to talk to and
17 hear from all of you about how the agency is developing and fostering and
18 hopefully encouraging the kind of culture that we need that brings everybody
19 together to really accomplish the mission, and the mission is more salient
20 and more urgent than ever. We're facing an increasing operational tempo,
21 if you will, in terms of interest from both our existing licensees and new
22 potential licensees, and I certainly agree with my colleagues that it's
23 important to kind of bring everybody together.

24 There are a couple of aspects in which this happens, right,
25 and certainly the telework and the work of the implementation working group

1 has been important as we figure out kind of how to move forward together.
2 It's required a lot of creativity. It's required a lot of innovation, I think, as we
3 do this. And even as we kind of figure out the mechanics of what life is
4 going to look like going forward in the agency, Dan, I think you mentioned it
5 recently in a EDO update that we're going to focus on the culture in the
6 meantime. And I think that's exactly right.

7 So kind of along those lines, I've got kind of a handful of
8 questions. This is kind for Jack, and, MJ, kind of for you. I was looking at
9 the FEVS results recently again and noticing some differences, I think,
10 between the regions and headquarters. You know, in general, we see
11 higher employee satisfaction, a higher level of trust in senior management --
12 not that there aren't bright points here at headquarters, too -- in the regions.
13 And I guess what it raised for me was, obviously, and I think all of us see this
14 when we go out to visit the regions, there are some good things happening
15 out there. Oh, that's a really great idea, or, oh, look at that initiative, and so
16 forth. And we see it at headquarters, as well. MJ, you highlighted some of
17 the stuff in NRR.

18 So how are those good practices kind of making their way
19 through the agency? How are we sharing what we know? You know,
20 culture is, sometimes it's person to person, sometimes it's group to group,
21 sometimes it's from leadership, sometimes it's from the bottom up. So what
22 are your kind of observations and how can we make kind of cultural
23 transmission, if you will, more effective in the agency?

24 MR. GIESSNER: I'll start. I think the best way is when
25 it's at the grassroots level. Desired culture team at the agency has a

1 headquarters components, and there's regions that have components, and
2 they meet periodically, they have guest speakers, and they talk about things
3 that can work and they share best ideas.

4 At the regional administrator and like the head of NRR and
5 NSIR, we meet every two weeks virtually and talk about things. And we talk
6 about the way we can work better together, and we share ideas.

7 But I believe that the grassroots effort is much better.
8 When you talk about inclusion, you have to include people in the day-to-day
9 activities. It's not just -- Commissioner Caputo, it resonated with me that it's
10 not a process per se that will include people. You have to include them in
11 the things that you do generally, whether it's getting a cup of coffee. And
12 sometimes you have to make those ideas well known.

13 And I think good ideas are spreading, but I also think that it
14 takes time, and that's the problem is the appetite for change is high, so
15 people want to change. But culture doesn't change that fast. You have to
16 bring people together and connect them. You have to get them to believe
17 that it's okay to include everybody. And that you can do at the grassroots
18 level. That's kind of my take.

19 MS. ROSS-LEE: Well, and I just wanted to add to the
20 committees that Amanda had gone through and talked. Each of those, as
21 far as I'm aware, I'm most familiar with the Federal Women's Program
22 because that's the one I'm the sponsor for, have a regional component.
23 And at each of our meetings, the regional component tells us about the
24 things that are going on at the region. And I know we have embraced some
25 of those ideas, we've taken some of those ideas and have grown from them,

1 so I know that's a really good communication tool where we are, at least
2 monthly, talking to the region about what's going on, what are you doing in
3 these areas of activities.

4 And, again, at the grassroots level, for what Jack was
5 talking about, the quarterly meetings where the regions all get together at
6 the division level, we frequently have staff that participate. Just earlier this
7 month, I had a whole bunch of staff who went out to Region II, for instance.
8 It was a wonderful opportunity, again, at that grassroots level for the staff to
9 talk, ideas to be formed. You know, my branch chief was out there, came
10 back with, like, some really good feedback, some really good ideas. We do
11 those virtually, as well, you know, even when we can't. But, again, I think
12 sometimes getting feet in place at those events because it's the sidebar
13 conversations, generally speaking. It's the ones that you have outside of
14 the formal presentations that I think help to have those ideas grow. And I
15 think more and more the way we can facilitate that, that will help.

16 I know we've been working trying to figure out what's the
17 answer to the virtual sidebar conversation that would happen if you were
18 there, but you're not, so how do you make that happen. And we've all been
19 kind of trying to bat that idea around how to make that real, but I think the
20 more we can grow that I think will help facilitate this exchange of good ideas.

21 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Go ahead.

22 MR. DORMAN: Yes. Thanks. I wholeheartedly
23 endorse the grassroots notion, and I'd just add that, as people move through
24 their career and move across the agency in different offices, that helps to
25 facilitate that. I think there's a couple of things that my team in the EDO's

1 office that facilitate, there's a culture network and there's a change agents
2 network that bring in people at the grassroots from across the agency to
3 have conversations on a regular basis and share experiences. And I think
4 my observation through my career and particularly in the context of our
5 culture improvement plans in response to FEVS and other inputs is most
6 effective when the staff are actively engaged in the process in developing
7 that plan. That is where the benefit is.

8 CHAIR HANSON: Anyone else? Amanda.

9 MS. BLACK: I was just going to add that, you know, kind
10 of what MJ said, that the EEO committees are a really great tool for getting
11 people involved with the virtual environment. We've had super great
12 success with all the committees reaching the regional, you know, people that
13 are there and having them be included in any of the events that we have, so
14 that's another great, you know, positive thing from the virtual environment.
15 But, yes, just utilizing us in any way. We have a good reach.

16 We've also leaned on each other, the committees leaned
17 on each other for distribution to get the word out so we can kind of, you
18 know, have more involvement, have people show up to the events. So it's
19 been really great.

20 CHAIR HANSON: Good. Thank you very much, all of
21 you.

22 Mary, I think this is a question for you; I'm not 100-percent
23 sure. So I saw that, you know, in terms of the recent hires, I think we were
24 at 38.5 percent in terms of women, which is just slightly below kind of the
25 overall agency. But I think we know, at least in kind of the technical

1 programs, right, that the representation of women is actually lower than that,
2 right? It's down in the 30s somewhere and kind of has been historically.

3 So for NRR, NMSS, and the other kind of technical offices,
4 what's the, you know, how has hiring been overall? Do you have that
5 number by any chance?

6 MS. LAMARY: I don't have the number, but I can tell you
7 a couple of areas that would speak to the technical side of it. So our NRAN
8 program, this current cohort is about, I'd say, 45 - 48 percent to 55, 52
9 percent. On the female side, it's the lower side, but it's in the 40s, better
10 than our current. With respect to the CDP program, the minority and
11 women demographic is 62 percent, so 38 percent of the CDP program would
12 be white male; 62 percent would be women and minorities. On the
13 technical side, because we did a technical track and a corporate track, on
14 the technical side, 53 percent are women and minorities.

15 So I think we're making progress. Much like culture, it's
16 not going to change overnight, but we are incrementally making progress,
17 sir.

18 CHAIR HANSON: Great. Building the pipeline is the
19 main thing, right? Making progress over time. I just want to use -- oh,
20 sorry, Vonna, go ahead.

21 MS. ORDAZ: I just wanted to recognize our whole row of
22 NRANers in row number two over to your right that are happy to be here
23 today with us.

24 CHAIR HANSON: Absolutely. Even with a fun
25 Christmas sweater. There's extra points for that. I appreciate that. Thank

1 you, Vonna. Of course.

2 I just want to take just a couple of additional seconds for a
3 couple of shout outs. One, Jack, I think you had a slide of Gail Christoffer
4 Baruch, right, and she's doing this great volunteer work and work with
5 veterans and so forth. I had the pleasure this week of signing her, length of
6 service certificate, 45 years of service in the federal government. So, Gail,
7 if you're out there watching, thank you for your service.

8 I was up in Region I, Commissioner Crowell and I were up
9 in Region I at the end of last week, and I had the chance to congratulate and
10 shake the hand of Gerry Powell. She's been here over 45 years now, as
11 well. She's getting ready to retire on March 31st. She's been a long-time
12 administrative assistant with the agency.

13 So with that, thanks again, everyone, for being here, and
14 I'll hand it over to Commissioner Baran.

15 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Thank you. Well, thank you
16 all for your presentations and for your efforts to boost diversity and inclusion
17 at NRC. I want to start by just applauding OCHCO's efforts and really all of
18 the offices' work to recruit and bring 271 external hires into the agency's
19 pipeline last fiscal year. After several years of very limited external hiring,
20 it's a major accomplishment to ramp up hiring to that level. And significant
21 hiring is necessary for the agency to do the work we have in front of us now
22 and to be ready for the work ahead of us in the future.

23 As I said before, increased hiring also presents a huge
24 opportunity to reach a diverse pool of applicants and then bring people into
25 the agency to represent a cross-section of America.

1 Mary, the aspirational hiring goal for this fiscal year is 400
2 external hires. Last year, we talked about some of the challenges that
3 OCHCO faced in ramping up hiring. What challenges do you see as we
4 continue to accelerate hiring this fiscal year?

5 MS. LAMARY: Thank you for the question, sir, and for the
6 recognition. It was certainly an agency-wide effort to accomplish those
7 hires.

8 With respect to challenges for this year, we did have some
9 lessons learned. This is why some of the resources that we asked for went
10 beyond FTE. It's not just bodies. We requested some money for some
11 technology for data analytics. We requested support to participate in some
12 diversity hiring networking associations. We want to ramp up some of our
13 outreach and recruiting efforts and update our marketing materials. So
14 there is a lot that we learned.

15 We would be, for example, at recruitment events and we
16 were seeing that our branding was not just eye catching, it was not
17 attractive. If your product isn't attractive, they're not going to want to come
18 to your agency to work. And so a lot of lessons learned, and we have been
19 very, very much supported. I recognize that our efforts in OCHCO really
20 support the entire agency. We did not hire 271 folks in OCHCO. They
21 were placed across the agency, so, certainly, it's an agency-wide effort. But
22 thank you, sir.

23 COMMISSIONER BARAN: In looking at our posted
24 vacancies on USAJOBS, I see that we're leaning in on external hiring and
25 explicitly listing how people outside of the agency and outside of government

1 service may be eligible to apply. Can you talk a bit about our approach to
2 postings?

3 MS. LAMARY: Thank you. Yes. So we are, obviously
4 we're posting our jobs on USAJOBS, but, as I just mentioned, we're also
5 launching some efforts in LinkedIn. I've already gotten some feedback that
6 some folks are seeing more and more NRC postings in LinkedIn, more
7 mentions. We're also, as I said, looking to gain access to a diversity
8 network platform.

9 One of the lessons that we did learn when we went
10 external, which was to increase the candidate pool, somebody might post a
11 job, they might select an internal candidate, but then we have that qualified
12 pool that we can fill other vacancies from and reduce the hiring time. So we
13 thought that was great, except we learned, one of the lessons learned was it
14 was sending a message to folks inadvertently here at the NRC that they
15 weren't wanted, that we didn't value them as candidates. Nothing could be
16 further from the truth, so we've begun including an absolutely affirmative
17 statement in every job announcement that NRC employees are encouraged,
18 not just wanted, not just desired, but encouraged to apply for these
19 vacancies.

20 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Well, that's great. And you
21 talked a little bit about this earlier with Commissioner Caputo because, as
22 we increase external hiring, there's also the challenge of providing
23 professional growth for our current employees. We heard a lot about that
24 during this year's All Employees meeting and the desire for that. That may
25 be moving folks to, you know, from a different program office to provide

1 experience or it may be promotional opportunities, so I really appreciate that
2 you're focused on that. I was heartened to see the 150 moves that you
3 talked about this past fiscal year because I think you're absolutely right. We
4 need to do this external hiring. We also have to make sure that people
5 have promotional opportunities. And I don't know if there's anything you
6 wanted to add on that, but I'm very encouraged that we seem to be striking a
7 balance there.

8 MS. LAMARY: Thank you. I would just say that the data
9 seems to support that, as well. Seventy-five percent of the CDP class are
10 internal selections. As I said, 60 percent of our attrition rate was 14 and 15
11 and, yet, only, I think, I don't have the exact number, 12.8 percent of the 271
12 hires were at the 14 or 15 level. And they didn't lie fallow. They did not lie
13 vacant. We filled those 14s and 15s that went vacant, and we did that
14 internally. So the data supports that, as well. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Are there other authorities
16 that the agency is using to fill positions from broad diverse applicant pools
17 for posted jobs? Are there any statutory limitations impeding progress on
18 hiring?

19 MS. LAMARY: I wouldn't say that they are necessarily
20 impeding us. I would say that, up to now, we've not necessarily availed
21 ourselves. So we know they're there. Now that we are ramping up hiring,
22 we're going to access them more and more. It's a question of training folks
23 to think about looking at a direct hire pool, Schedule A candidates, we're
24 looking to build and populate a Schedule A database. Schedule A is terrific
25 because you don't even have to post the job. If we have a viable database,

1 you can look in there, and if there's somebody there that meets your position
2 you can just make them an offer. So you don't have to post the job, you
3 don't have to go through the entire hiring process. So it's incumbent on
4 OCHCO to build that capability for the agency, and that's one of the
5 initiatives that we're working on internally.

6 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Let me ask about something
7 you mentioned a couple of times, which is Senior Executive Service, or SES,
8 candidate selection. A new slate of SES candidate development program
9 participants for NRC was just announced recently. Congratulations to those
10 selected. A few years back, we were struggling with diversity within the
11 NRC senior leadership ranks and within the SES candidate development
12 program classes and SES CDP in particular, you know, the number of
13 women in there, which was very, very low. It was really discouraging the
14 last go-around.

15 So the senior leaders at the time took a hard look at the
16 candidate selection process. And at this meeting in 2018, the staff
17 presented changes to the selection process to introduce more objectivity and
18 mitigate possible unconscious bias in the process. Can you talk a little bit
19 about whether those changes have been effective? It sounds like maybe, in
20 terms of the results, it's looking like they were.

21 MS. LAMARY: Yes, sir. Again, I think the data supports
22 us. I think we've been very successful in beginning to turn that tide. I
23 mentioned that 62 or 68, 62 I think, 38 percent are white males, 62 percent
24 of the incoming CDP class are women and minorities. So, again, we're
25 increasing that diversity.

1 Another positive aspect to the CDP program that was done
2 just this year, because we continue to improve over time, is we shortened
3 the program from 18 to 24 months to 12 months minimum to complete that
4 program and become certified. So we're sort of fast-tracking that.
5 Sixty-two percent that is a favorable increase will be available to us sooner,
6 not that we necessarily want our executives to leave but we have an
7 available candidate pool that's going to be very diverse and ready to move
8 into positions. And when they move up, 75 percent of them are internal
9 candidates, when they move up that creates more vacancies at the 14 - 15
10 level. And as we've demonstrated and I've remarked several times, we're
11 filling those internally, as well. So it's a domino effect, sir.

12 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Great. Given what seems
13 like a successful effort here, I don't know that you all are looking at additional
14 changes to consider, but any sense of whether you having gone through
15 kind of the new approach on this class or the SES CDP, do you think about
16 any other changes to the program?

17 MS. LAMARY: I don't have any specifically in mind, but,
18 as I said, we weren't planning to, but one of the refinements we did was to
19 shorten this year's program to have a ready slate available to us sooner.
20 So over time, if we identify improvements, we'll certainly look to see if there
21 are ways that we can implement them for our program.

22 COMMISSIONER BARAN: Well, it sounds like we're
23 making real progress on diversity in SES candidate development program.
24 That's great to hear.

25 Jack, MJ, Amanda, and Vonna, I really appreciate

1 everything you and your organizations are doing to celebrate our diversity,
2 raise awareness of the challenges folks face, and support all of our
3 employees. It's so important, both for individuals and for our overall
4 organizational health. We do better work for the American public if we're
5 focused on and making progress on diversity, equity, inclusion, and
6 accessibility.

7 And, Anthony, I don't want to leave you out. Congrats on
8 NRC's most recent A-plus from SBA. That's a tremendous achievement.
9 And as Commissioner Crowell intuited, it's really part of a long track record
10 of success for our small business program, so thank you and your team.

11 Thanks again, everyone. And I will turn it back over to the
12 Chair.

13 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Baran.
14 Commissioner Wright.

15 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Good morning and, wow,
16 what a great meeting this has been. And this meeting or any other meeting
17 we have, I mean, you can pick a path and you can go down it. There's just
18 so many ways to go. Very good discussion.

19 Before I get started, and I hope to be able to get to some
20 questions, I just want to thank Commissioner Caputo personally for sharing
21 the way you did. Not only was it sincere, but the strength of what you said
22 and the strength of your commitment, it really shown through, and I
23 appreciate you more for it and look forward to working with you to help you in
24 what you are trying to accomplish, as well. So thank you for that.

25 We're all a product of where, you know, what our life

1 experiences are, right, which coming from South Carolina and North
2 Carolina where I was born and raised and attending Clemson, which, you
3 know, we have the greater Clemson club here at the NRC, Amanda, and I try
4 to promote that where possible. We try to get along with our Alabama
5 brethren. You know, I was raised by my parents to respect people, period,
6 and to help where I could in those opportunities. And through life, from that,
7 I learned the importance of encouraging people and empowering people.
8 And I try to do that today, which I'm very glad that you brought up the
9 NRANers because I was going to do it. It's on the top of my page right
10 here. I made a point intentionally to go down and say hello to each of them
11 as I came in the room today to find out where they were working and what
12 area, what region, because, obviously, they're the future of the NRC, okay.
13 And there's a lot of things that you can connect to this, right? They're here
14 live and in person. They're hungry, you know. They are motivated. And
15 the one thing that we need to provide them and the others who are going to
16 onboard here is going to be mentorship and training.

17 So, you know, Chair and my fellow Commissioners, think
18 about this. I'd like to maybe use a meeting possibly to talk about the
19 mentorship and training that we have at the NRC, not just today but what are
20 we going to need going forward as we look at advanced reactors, we look at
21 the reactor program we got now and how we're changing it, fusion, the
22 materials side of things, right, medical advances and how we're going to
23 have to provide those training opportunities, as well. It fits in this type of a
24 meeting, right, so I think it's something we might want to maybe talk about.
25 And I would be for that.

1 I really believe that, and I know Commissioner Crowell
2 talked about the hybrid workforce, you know, hybrid meetings or hybrid
3 working environment going forward, and were we prepared, you know, we
4 talk the talk, but are we really walking the talk, right? Are we ready to walk
5 that talk the way it needs to be done. So the fact that there's questions and
6 real concern by my fellow colleagues up here is encouraging and should be
7 encouraging to you as senior staff, but it really should be encouraging to the
8 new people here at the agency, whether they're in this room here or they're
9 listening online.

10 And, you know, I'm going to do what I can. I'm one
11 person, one vote. But I got a lot of energy, and I like to see things get done.
12 So I want to help you in any way that I can.

13 But I really feel that we've got, being together in a room in
14 person makes a huge difference. It makes a huge difference. So this
15 whole presence with a purpose concept, I know that we're just now talking it
16 through, but we've got to get it right. If we don't get it right, we're going to
17 suffer as an agency, you know, because these are the regulators of the
18 future.

19 Mary, I'm one of those seasoned people that you talked
20 about. You know, and I get it. But that's the point. I got to be able to
21 share, and the seasoned people in this agency have got to be able to share,
22 not just about, not just training and mentorship but also in the whole, just the
23 whole inclusion thing. It's important on every level. We're not going to
24 accomplish anything if we don't respect people and we're not
25 compassionate. We can solve so many issues just like that if we just

1 practice that. And you know it when you see it, right? And I want to
2 encourage that myself.

3 So very quickly, Jack, I'm going to come to you real quick
4 because I think this fits. You know, you and I had a periodic just the other
5 day, and we talked about the resident inspectors. And one of the things
6 that we talked about was what are we going to do going forward, how do we
7 encourage them, how do we recruit them, who do we attract them, right, and
8 then how do we provide something for them because they're on the front
9 line. They're not going to be able to get what some of the other people in
10 the agency might get. So how do we do that, right? And we talked about
11 some ideas maybe. I think one of the things was moving people up a grade
12 to 14s and 15s, right? And you made the comment to me, I think, you
13 know, subject to you saying that's what you actually said, but I think you
14 made the comment to me that we have tried some of this stuff before, but
15 now may be the right time to go for it. Could you maybe share some of
16 that?

17 MR. GIESSNER: Right. You know, we have made
18 progress. We've done some changes. We've done some work, and I'll call
19 it the bottom-line salary to make sure people don't lose funding. We've
20 done some pieces that -- in the past, about three years ago, we tried, and I
21 think maybe the paper didn't have the right metrics on it to ensure we could
22 prove our case of, hey, this is what we want to do for the recruiting and
23 retention. Is it really an issue, right? Is it a problem?

24 I always look at it this way: a mature organization is always
25 learning, and so it may not be a problem, but you can do things better. And

1 there's an organization that is looking from the SRM that's out of NRR that all
2 the regions participate and they're building the metrics and everything. And
3 I think all ideas are welcome, and I think there is, I've gotten some feedback
4 from resident inspectors. I think it's fair to say I'm not the only -- well, I'm
5 the RA here. I'm saying that we can't increase more telework for the
6 resident inspectors. We already have a memo that allows about a day's
7 worth of project-based, but you need to be on-site, you need to be watching
8 what's going on. So I don't think that's going to be the area.

9 So we have to look at incentivizing, but I do think the future
10 is, with the change in the family dynamic, how do you keep the resident
11 inspector that wants to stay in the area afterwards. So I think the short
12 answer is we probably should take back to the group what ideas do we need
13 to have in this new re-entered hybrid environment, what does it look like?
14 And I can take that back to them.

15 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I brought that up for a
16 reason because I wanted to build on it because I do have a concern. I've
17 shared it with the EEO, with Dan, and with others, you know, with Daryl and
18 with Cathy and others about, you know, my concern is how do we build the
19 employee that we're going to need going forward in the environment that we
20 are in and it looks like we're going to move toward in some fashion.

21 So the whole presence with a purpose makes a lot of
22 sense if it's done correctly because, you know, the whole new normal, we're
23 going to have some issues, and I can see it. And so what we have to do or
24 what we're trying to do with our resident inspector program, recognizing that
25 it's a two-professional family most times, right, and that not all resident

1 inspector spots are equal, right, and some people we can't get people to say
2 they want to go there and others we have a waiting list that, you know, until
3 you and I retire.

4 So I appreciate what the working group is doing, and I
5 want to just publicly say to you again that I'm going to, I'll do anything I can
6 to help you there, and, you know, any time I go to plants this is what we talk
7 about. I go right to this topic because the resident inspector program and
8 attracting people into that program is critical because that is the front-line.

9 So with that, you know, we've got 221 new people, 400
10 more coming, Mary. This whole how do we build an employee, how do we
11 train them, it's big. I know you're going to bring them, but we've got to solve
12 that problem there. So thank you for that.

13 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Wright.
14 Now I'd like to welcome and recognize Sheryl Sanchez representing the
15 National Treasury Employees Union for her remarks. Sheryl.

16 MS. SANCHEZ: Good morning, Chair Hanson,
17 Commissioners, EDO Dorman, managers, staff, members of the public, and
18 most importantly NRC bargaining unit employees. I'm Sheryl Sanchez,
19 President of NTEU Chapter 208, and I'm pleased to be giving the union
20 comments this morning. I'm joined here in the room and virtually by many
21 NTEU team members, such as stewards, labor partners, executive board
22 members, who work on your behalf every day. Without such a dedicated
23 team, NTEU would not be able to work together to strive to ensure that every
24 NRC employee is treated with dignity and respect.

25 NTEU is aware that the last two and a half years have

1 been particularly challenging for our employees. We're ending 2022 in
2 extremely challenging times, and it doesn't seem like the start of 2023 will be
3 less challenging. The last time I made comments to the Commission, I
4 noted that in a study of people in all kinds of super challenging settings, one
5 character emerged as a significant predictor of success, and that character
6 was grit. Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is
7 having stamina. Grit is working towards your goals day-in and day-out, not
8 just for the week, not just for the month, but for years.

9 Although this isn't exactly the same as resilience, I believe
10 the two are related. Resilient people experience stress and difficult
11 emotions, but they tap into their strengths and seek help from their support
12 systems to overcome these challenges and work through problems.
13 Resilience empowers them to accept and adapt to a situation and move
14 forward. I propose that resilient people have grit, and people with grit are
15 resilient. Both attributes are essential to survive and, in fact, thrive during
16 challenging times.

17 And I did not have any coordination with Commissioner
18 Caputo, but the end of the year is approaching and I've been doing some
19 reflecting of how much things have changed since I decided in high school in
20 the 70s that I was going to become a nuclear engineer. I will focus on my
21 perspective as a woman since this is the view that I'm most familiar with, but
22 no doubt my experiences are not that different from other minorities who
23 have endured discrimination, insensitive treatment, and a lack of equity, and
24 in some instances subtle but in others downright blatant. It would be nice if
25 we could say that we've come so far and that things are so much better, but

1 I'm not so sure this is the case across the board.

2 There is still far to go until everyone is truly valued for who
3 they are. I remember my high school guidance counselor

4 Who, when I told him of my desire to become a nuclear
5 engineer maybe '78-ish, he said I couldn't do that. And his recommendation
6 was I should seriously consider nuclear medicine because that was much
7 more appropriate. It was more in the line of nursing and much more
8 appropriate. Thank goodness my grandmother told me she would beat him
9 up as well as anyone else who told me I couldn't do anything I wanted to.
10 We all need advocates.

11 Next, I think of my first engineering job at the Department
12 of Energy in Albuquerque. As it was my first professional position, I didn't
13 necessarily know what behavior was appropriate and what wasn't. I think
14 young professionals today are much savvier than I was.

15 I had a mentor and he was actually wonderful, taught me a
16 lot of great technical stuff, but he would stand up and shout over his cubicle,
17 Henry, my last name was Henry back then, get your skinny A word for tushy
18 over here.

19 (Laughter.)

20 And I did. You know? I have to believe that I don't think
21 that would happen today, but you know.

22 Then after a few years, I was fortunate enough to get a
23 Department of Energy fellowship and pursue a master's degree in nuclear
24 engineering, after which I started working at Sandia National Laboratories.
25 On one occasion, I went to consult with a staff member regarding shield

1 design and I was given library books to return, which I did, and I circled
2 around back. But after explaining that I was here to talk about the shield
3 design, I did get a heartfelt apology and I do believe it was sincere.

4 But in this job at least, I never felt disrespected or
5 dismissed or that anyone ever thought that I was a quota. Quite the
6 opposite. Although there was sexism, I felt that my peers believed the fact
7 that I was there was an indication that I had value to add, meaning by virtue
8 of the fact that I was there, they believed I was smart.

9 In my union dealings though, I've had women, as well as
10 other minorities, indicate that they were told flat out that they were a quota or
11 they wondered if they were given an opportunity because of this. This is
12 very sad. Have we really come so far or have we just become more clever?

13 It is encouraging to see on Slide 8 that EEO complaints
14 have been decreasing since 2020, but the union has not seen a similar
15 decrease in employees seeking our counsel. Time will tell, but it could be
16 that employees have just stopped fighting because they don't think the
17 Agency cares about them any more.

18 It is also encouraging to see the 2020 hiring data on Slides
19 45 and 46 and it's wonderful to bring on board more minorities, more
20 females, more disabled, more veterans. But it's a lot more difficult providing
21 these employees with real opportunities to be represented at all levels of the
22 Agency and really see the possibility as they -- that they can go as far as
23 their work-desiring ability allow.

24 It's also another matter to keep these valuable employees
25 happy, retain them, and have them want to make their career or their second

1 career at the NRC. To be successful at this, and if we hope to come close
2 to our 2023 aspirational hiring goal, we're going to have to rethink our
3 position on remote and full-time telework. If we could open all positions to
4 the whole country, imagine how this would increase our diversity.

5 As important also as it is to pursue external hires, we also
6 must focus on keeping our current valuable employees happy and at the
7 Agency. This includes giving remote and full-time teleworkers the same
8 promotional opportunities as those that are local. We've had many
9 employees who report to us that it's much more difficult to get promoted if
10 you work remotely. We must do better.

11 I will finish with a brief summary of two current issues and
12 invite you all to reach out to NTEU if you would like to discuss any of this in
13 more detail.

14 First, we're happy to report that we signed an MOU to
15 renovate the 11th and 13th floors of One White Flint North at headquarters.
16 We were able to avoid having the impasse panel make this decision. The
17 floors will not look anything like the current 6th floor, by the way. We put out
18 a union announcement with much more detail.

19 Second, we put out a series of announcements dealing
20 with the Phase One Telework Working Group recommendations. They've
21 been consolidated into one document thanks to Dan Frumkin and they're on
22 the chapter website. So those of you that don't get the union
23 announcements that want to look at them, there's a series of
24 announcements.

25 We will not give up the fight until we have true presence

1 with a purpose, full stop. NTEU will always be here for our bargaining unit
2 employees. Feel free to reach out to us during these challenging times.
3 We have a great team, both locally and in our national office. For those of
4 you who are not that involved with the union, but perhaps would like to be,
5 please join NTEU in our efforts to make the NRC a better place for everyone.

6 Please take care of yourselves and your coworkers.
7 Practice empathy. Be kind to each other. Be kind to yourselves. I hope you
8 can all take some time off at the end of the year, but if you cannot use your
9 leave, please donate it to those employees on the leave donation list. Even a
10 little means so much to an employee who is need.

11 Happy holidays from me and the entire NTEU team. We
12 look forward to serving you in 2023. Thank you for your attention.

13 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Sheryl. Happy holidays to
14 you as well.

15 As we wrap up, I want to thank you all again for being here
16 and thank you for your really data-rich presentations. I think it's enormously
17 helpful.

18 I want to appreciate my colleagues. I hope staff come
19 away with a message that there's a lot of support on the Commission for the
20 initiatives that are ongoing within the Agency and whether it's FWPAC or
21 other equity and affinity groups in the Agency, I hope folks have heard some
22 good messages today because I think that was certainly the intention.

23 And I would also emphasize, too, that the -- just
24 emphasize I think the overall theme and I think you heard this throughout the
25 Commission about the importance of personal interaction.

1 And as we think about attrition or whatever, right, I was
2 reminded as folks were talking that people don't leave organizations.
3 People leave people, sometimes, when they have that job. And what we
4 want to do is there will always be reasons for folks to move on to other good
5 things in their careers and we want to celebrate that, right, people pursuing
6 their path as they need to. But we don't want one of those things to be the
7 Agency culture around here or to feel like they couldn't get their voices heard
8 or that they got talked over or that there wasn't a space here for them at the
9 NRC.

10 I think that the last message among us today that I hope
11 you heard was that the mission and accomplishing that with excellence is
12 important and it really -- accomplishing that really needs all of us together.
13 So thank you all again and with that, we are adjourned.

14 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record
15 at 11:58 a.m.)

16