

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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36TH REGULATORY INFORMATION CONFERENCE (RIC)

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COMMISSIONER DAVID A. WRIGHT PLENARY

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TUESDAY,

MARCH 12, 2024

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The Plenary Session convened at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road, Rockville, Maryland, and via Video-Teleconference, at 9:00 a.m. EDT, The Honorable David A. Wright, Commissioner, NRC, presiding.

PRESENT:

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner, NRC

ANDREA VEIL, Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, NRC

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

9:01 a.m.

MS. VEIL: All right, good morning, again.

I'm supposed to introduce Commissioner Wright, but I do not see him, so please don't tell me he's done this again.

(Video played.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Just outside of the Nation's capital of Washington, D.C., in the small city of Rockville, Maryland, stand three white buildings housing the headquarters of the world's gold standard regulatory safety organization, whose responsibility is to provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection and the licensing and regulation of the nation's civilian use of byproduct, source, and special nuclear materials in order to protect public health and safety, promote the common defense and security, and protect the environment.

This is the control room of the U.S. NRC from where everything is monitored. And it is from here, in coordination with our facilities in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Illinois, Texas, and Tennessee, that the people of the U.S. NRC are sent out across the country to inspect and maintain the safety of the nation's nuclear plants, as well as the safety of our country's nuclear materials license-holders, and to assist and mentor like-minded countries around the world as their nuclear program develop and grow.

And the people of the U.S. NRC have been successfully doing their important work for the last 50 years. My name is David Wright, one of the Commissioners of the U.S. NRC. It's our job to oversee and

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provide the necessary resources so they can successfully enable the safe deployment and safe use of nuclear technologies here and around the globe.

This is Wright. Yes? Thank you.

Excuse me, I have to go now, I'm being called into a special meeting.

(Video concluded.)

(Applause.)

MS. VEIL: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome your man from the U.S. NRC, Commissioner David Wright.

(Applause.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Good morning.

I have to get situated here.

So, again, good morning, everyone, and thank you for the welcome. I hope you enjoyed the video my team and I put together.

(Applause.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: It's, you know, showcasing our inspectors and our administrative staff and everyone who sacrifices daily to keep all things nuclear safe and reliable. So, we had a lot of fun building it for you.

And, as always, a big shout-out and thank you to my friends in AV, Kevin, Kyle, and Leon. Y'all are awesome to work with.

And I also want to express my immense appreciation for all of those involved with organizing the RIC this year. I always look forward to this conference, as you can tell. I get to meet folks and

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hear about everything going on in the nuclear space. And I know it's an incredible amount of work that goes on in planning this every year. So, thanks to all of you. You've really outdone yourselves again this year.

So, as you know, my name is David Wright. And I'm appearing today in my role as the man from the U.S. NRC, and one of the four Commissioners currently serving at the NRC. To those of you here in the room, and to those of you watching online, welcome to the 2024 Regulatory Information Conference hosted by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

My goal and hope during the next 30 to 45 minutes is to inform you, to motivate you, to challenge you, and spotlight, sometimes literally, some of the great people that ensure the safe deployment and safe use of nuclear technologies.

You know, as plenary sessions go, this is the first time that I've presented immediately following the Chair, or any other Chair for that matter. And, Chair Hanson, you're a tough act to follow. Very good job. To you and to Commissioner Caputo and Commissioner Crowell, thank you for your friendship and for the collegial way that you and each of your staff work with me and my team.

To my team, Team Wright, you're simply the best. I'm blessed by each of you and I thank you for what you do for me, what you do for each other, for the NRC, and for the country.

As part of my RIC remarks each year, I do my best to give you an update on the happenings in my life during the previous year.

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And some years are more eventful than others.

You may remember, in my RIC presentation from my kitchen table during COVID in 2021, I shared that my mother's home had been invaded by squirrels and they ate through the waterlines inside her home and flooded her downstairs. What a mess that was. And catching the squirrels, well, that's a whole other story.

Two years ago, right before the RIC, believe it or not, my home flooded from the inside, but not because of squirrels. So in my RIC presentation last year, I shared how I lived on a microwave and a grill during 2022 while my home was being torn apart and rebuilt.

The morning I got that call about the flooding of my home back in March of 2022, I drove home immediately. And when I got home and I saw the damage to my house, my heart sank, and my spirit just fell apart, too.

After seeing the extensive damage from the water that it -  
- what it had cause to my home, I went to see my mom. And she knew that I was devastated. So, she did what only a mother could do, she looked at me, smiled, and said, "Copycat."

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: That made me laugh, and somehow, I immediately felt better about the curveball life had thrown at me.

What a multi-year mess it's been. And those of you who've gone through something similar, you know exactly what I mean.

2023 was a busy year for me and my family, too. My youngest son, Andrew, who has his Master's in Math, went through the first year

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of the doctoral program at the Medical University of South Carolina where he's getting a PhD in data science. He and his wife, who is in pharmacy school there at the same university herself, are loving life and doing very well.

My daughters, Kimberly and Courtney and their respective families, continue to blaze their own trails and do new things in 2023. Kimberly, as a kindergarten teacher for 19 years now, and Courtney, in multiple roles at the South Carolina Department of Workforce for almost the same length of time. Their spouses are hardworking and very supportive of them, too.

Last, but not least, my oldest son, Austin and his wife, brought a new Wright into the world, my eighth grandchild, a granddaughter. The name of the latest "small modular" addition is Nellie Michelle Wright. And she came into the world on November 9th of last year, at full power, I might add. She's a beautiful little girl and her brother, Hank, cannot get enough of her.

So, if you can't tell, I'm a proud dad and a proud Paw Paw, too. I do love my family. I had to move my mom, who will soon be 93, to an assisted living facility this past April. She had a really rough 2023, but she's doing okay at the moment. She's one tough lady. And if I know mom like I think I do, I'm pretty sure she's going to be running that assisted living facility before the year's out.

You know, my parents helped me discover that I could do anything I set my mind to. They helped me establish and grow my faith. And taught me that, through faith, anything is possible. Anything,

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absolutely anything. I really relied on that during my battle with colon cancer back in 2008. And I have believed it and relied on it every day since.

My mom and dad influenced me in different ways. And I believe I'm a good mix of both of them. But I give mom credit for my volunteer spirit, for my desire to help others, for my desire to empower people to be successful and become the best version of themselves possible.

In addition to being an inspiration to me, my mom has spent her entire life in service to others, not just in her volunteering, but as a nurse, and in many different jobs as a nurse, too, including serving as a head nurse in charge of a facility that cared for Alzheimer's patients for the last 15 years of her career before she retired.

To me, mom is truly an angel on earth. And I believe I know what she might tell you today if she were speaking to you, because I've heard versions of this message growing up. She would say, "When you wake up each morning, you should think these things to yourself: First, what can I do today that will help my organization improve?" Whether that's here at the U.S. NRC or at your organization.

Second, "What can I do today that will empower the people around me to be the best versions of themselves?" Now, that might be at a branch at the NRC, or in your organization, or other organizations around the world.

And, last, "What can I do today to improve myself so that

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I can better support the people around me?" You know, for everyone here today and watching online, self-improvement should be a daily goal as we do our jobs with regulators to "meet the moment" here and at the NRC and -- or as you fulfill your mission at your organization.

You know, the people of the U.S. NRC, as well as regulators around the world, you're a special group. Everyone who works at the NRC plays an integral role. And what they do, what you do through your work each and every day, is important to the mission we all share through enabling the safe deployment and safe use of nuclear technologies, from licensing reactors to decommissioning, from fuels to medicine, and from inspecting those we regulate domestically to assisting and cooperating with our partners around the world.

I've shown this before, it's a bronze plaque that I keep on my desk that was given to me by one of my dad's radio station partners following my election to the South Carolina House of Representatives back in 1988. It's a replica of a quote President Ronald Reagan kept on his Oval Office desk that reads: "There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn't mind who gets the credit." I've done my best to try to live by that message through my personal and professional life.

And President John F. Kennedy said something similar in his inaugural address in January of 1961. A quote that inspired a generation of children and adults to see the importance of public service and volunteerism. I am one of those children.

He said, and I quote: "Ask not what your country can do for

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you - ask what you can do for your country", end quote.

I absolutely love the selfless approach and attitude in each of these examples, the personal challenge statements and the charges. And it's this kind of selfless service that our workforce displays on a daily basis that helps us meet our mission and has led to some significant accomplishments over the past year.

You know, although I don't have time to list all the things that the NRC staff has accomplished, as well as the Commission, since the last RIC, I do want to highlight a few.

First, Part 53, which provides a new regulatory framework for advanced reactors. It was just a year ago, a little over a year ago, that the staff sent up the draft version of Part 53 for the Commission to consider. It was over 1,200 pages long and it covered many technical topics, from quantitative health objectives to ALARA.

Over the past year, the four Commission offices have worked very closely together to enhance the draft rule into something that we can all agree on. My team also talked to a lot of stakeholders to get their feedback. Some of you are in this room this morning.

I'm happy to report that on Monday, March 4th, we issued our final Staff Requirements memo. And I believe this document provides clear policy direction to the staff and will allow them to make the necessary changes so that we can publish the proposed rule in the Federal Register, hopefully toward the end of the year.

Chair Hanson, Commission Caputo, and Commissioner Crowell:  
I truly appreciate the collegial spirit displayed by each of you and

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your staffs in working with me and my team. And I look forward to finalizing a rule that will be useful and usable.

Next, let me talk about the Advanced Nuclear Reactor Generic Environmental Impact Statement, or ANR GEIS. I voted on this last week. And although there's some details to work out, in my opinion, we're headed toward a great result.

This could provide predictability and durability in our regulatory decisions going forward and could reduce the cost of advanced reactor environmental reviews by maybe 20 to 45 percent, depending on the project.

Last Friday afternoon, I voted the License Renewal GEIS paper that was before the Commission. And I hope we will finish the SRM process for that paper very soon.

From a staffing perspective, we successfully onboarded just under 300 new employees, including our most recent cohort of 25 from the Nuclear Regulator Apprenticeship Network, or "NRAN" for short, which is our new training program for entry level employees.

Further, the NRC reconstituted our Minority-Serving Institutions Grants Program and provided awards of nearly \$1 million across four minority-serving institutions.

And we also signed or renewed bilateral arrangements with 16 countries, including several new regulatory counterparts. And by the way, this is the largest number of bilateral arrangements signed in a single year in the history of the U.S. NRC.

This year, 2024, is a big year, too, because it's the 50th

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anniversary of the NRC's Resident Inspection program. 50 years. Now, that's a big deal, and why I did the video. So, thank you to our resident inspectors, those who serve today and to anyone who has ever served as one.

We have at least two resident inspectors stationed at each of our 54 reactor sites across the country, and at least one resident inspector at both of our Category One fuel cycle facilities. Last year, I had the privilege of serving as a "resident for a day" at three of our sites. I'm planning on doing the same this year.

And I must tell you, it's not an easy job. So, I'm glad that we've got the best of the best doing it. As a resident inspector for a day, I spent each day onsite shadowing and experiencing what resident inspectors do, showing up with them as early as 4:30 in the morning, to observe the control room shift change and following them through every meeting and every inspection, both planned and unplanned.

I can tell you firsthand, all of our inspectors in the United States, as well as inspectors around the world - truly the boots on the ground every day - are selfless in their service to the public. Resident inspectors live out selfless values each and every day in support of the NRC's mission to provide "reasonable assurance of adequate protection and to protect the public and the environment."

These inspectors live in and are a part of the communities that are home to the plants where they work. They are passionate about their work, as well as about the role they play in the safe operation of the nuclear power plant or fuel facility they oversee. Or, to put it

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another way, to the public we serve in the United States, these inspectors are the NRC.

I encourage those of you who at the NRC or are thinking about a career at the NRC, to consider the role of a resident inspector as a career or as a rotation opportunity.

There's one resident inspector I'd like highlight this morning as a torch-bearer for every other resident inspector out there, both here in the United States and around the world. At this time, please help me recognize someone who is truly an inspector's inspector, Rogerio Reyes.

(Applause.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you. Rogerio has had an impressive career, to say the least. He started out at the NRC in Region I in 1994, and realized early on in his career how much he wanted to pursue being a resident inspector.

So, after getting some experience at the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant, he joined Region II where he became a resident inspector at Turkey Point. After that assignment, Rogerio served as the resident at Crystal River, St. Lucie, and then, again, at Turkey Point.

Rogerio, I'm sensing a Florida theme here. No wonder they call you the Florida man. So, Rogerio now provides vital coverage at various sites in Region II and mentor up and coming resident inspectors. I will join Rogerio in a few a minutes for a fireside chat.

Speaking of outstanding work, our resident inspectors conducted over 10,000 unique inspections across the U.S. reactor fleet

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in 2023. Ten thousand! Additionally, the NRC staff in Region II oversaw startup testing at Vogtle Unit 3 and verified its safe transition to commercial operations, which took place on July 31st of last year.

And headquarters staff prepared the 103(g) letter authorizing fuel load at Vogtle Unit 4, as Vogtle Unit 4 continues startup testing and approaches commercial operations in this year.

The Commission also issued a construction permit to Kairos for their Hermes 1 reactor, the first construction permit issued to a non-light water reactor in over 50 years.

And the NRC issued a final rule, 10 CFR 50.160, that offers a set of risk-informed emergency preparedness requirements for small modular reactors and other new technologies.

In terms of licensing, our staff completed nearly 800 licensing actions at reactors across the country, including new reactors.

So, now, let me turn to the world of materials. In the United States, the NRC has an agreement program with the states. This allows states in the program to assume portions of the NRC's regulatory authority through an agreement signed by the state's governor and the NRC's chair.

Currently, 39 states are in the Agreement State Program, with two more coming down the pike. As you can imagine, this program involves a lot of coordination and communication between the states and the NRC.

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When I think about the Agreement State Program, and when I talk to others about it, one name always comes up. And I want to highlight this person as the torch-bearer for the national materials program this morning. At this time, please say hello to another NRC great, Duncan White.

(Applause.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Duncan is certainly an expert in his field. He's an experienced health physicist and has been at the NRC for 33 years, working in various roles related to the Agreement State Program.

He started out in Region I as a materials inspector, a license reviewer, and a regional state agreement officer. He was a supervisor for the Agreement State Program branch and is now a senior technical expert in NMSS.

Duncan has been involved in constructing state agreements with the States of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, Wyoming, and he's currently working on agreements with Connecticut and Indiana, as well as a revised agreement with the State of Wyoming.

Duncan and I will chat later, as well, but before we leave the materials program, I want to highlight some of their accomplishments this year.

Staff oversaw the first, at least first for the United States, successful restart of a conversion facility, the Honeywell plant, which had been idle since 2017.

Staff continues to get ready for new fuels, too, from high-

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assay low-enriched uranium, or HALEU, fuel to TRISO fuel, from accident-tolerant fuel to new fuel fabrication facilities.

The NRC staff has been supporting and approving licensing actions for them all. NRC inspectors on the materials side conducted over 1,000 inspections this past year ranging from fuel facilities to nuclear materials, and from spent fuel storage and transportation, to decommissioning and low-level waste. And the Agreement States conducted thousands more.

Oh, yes, let's not forget about the newly organized Tribal program which conducted Tribal outreach on a host of activities, including a first of a kind meet and greet with the new Navajo Nation President, Dr. Buu Nygren.

In support of all that we do at the NRC, from headquarters to the regions, and from the Commissioners' offices to those we regulate, our administrative staff support it all. They are truly selfless in their support and their work and of the work being done at the U.S. NRC.

Now, before I go any further, I want to personally thank my admin team, Kim Lora and Patty Burbank. They keep me straight and on time and they don't lose me when I travel, either. That's very, very important.

This morning, I had planned to introduce to you in person to a regional administrative assistant who was going to serve and will serve still as the torch bearer for all admins here at the U.S. NRC, but due to a very late breaking curveball, Marilyn Evans, an admin above

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admins, was unable to travel.

Marilyn has been with the NRC almost 30 years. She has had and continues to have such a positive impact on so many people. Marilyn has been an administrative assistant at Vogtle's Unit 1 and 2, Savannah River's MOX fuel facility, Vogtle's Units 3 and 4, and Plant Hatch. She's even served at many of these sites at the same time.

Marilyn is a mentor and a trainer to administrative assistants at other sites, too. She's not finished, either, because she'll soon move from Region II to Region I where she's going to serve as the full-time administrative assistant at Beaver Valley.

I have something for you, Marilyn, if you're listening. So, I look forward to catching up with you soon.

Now, each of these areas that I've mentioned, the reactor, materials, and corporate support programs are critically important to our mission of providing reasonable assurance of adequate protection and to protect the public and the environment.

And they are important around the world, too. If you saw my RIC speech last year, you remember that I highlighted the importance of international cooperation following Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.

IAEA Director General Grossi was here and he echoed those remarks. And my fellow Commissioners and I had a chance to meet with Chairman Korikov of the State Nuclear Regulatory Inspector of Ukraine to hear firsthand about the challenges of performing their mission in an active war zone.

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We got to hear firsthand from the Ukrainian delegation about the atrocities taking place in their country and the extreme personal sacrifices that they and their families were making and are still making today. It was an eye-opening and sobering experience.

To me, this drove home the point of how important it is for the NRC to strengthen and maintain our partnerships with like-minded countries around the world.

To that end, my team and I have traveled to Romania, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Ghana, France, and Canada. And we'll do more. Each of these countries are different and have their own ways of doing things. But from what I saw, they have a lot in common with the United States.

First, they understand that nuclear power brings important benefits such as zero carbon emissions and energy independence.

Second, they recognize that the benefits of nuclear energy can only be realized if that energy is safe. And having a strong, independent regulator is the key to achieving that safety.

And, finally, they're keen on cooperating and collaborating with international partners such as the United States. And they want to work with other countries, not against them.

I'd like to tell you about a materials inspector I met at a cancer hospital in Ghana that demonstrated the spirit of international cooperation and collaboration. Her name is Cynthia Engmann. And she is a senior research scientist with the Ghanaian Nuclear Regulatory Authority.

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I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Engmann when we toured the Sweden Ghana Medical Center back in October of last year. During that tour, I got a chance to learn that she had spent the last 16 years performing safety inspections of medical, industrial, and research institutions in Ghana.

She also published several papers on patient radiation optimization and is an adjunct lecturer at the University of Ghana School of Nuclear and Allied Science where many students have benefitted from her instruction and mentorship.

And as someone who has been the beneficiary of nuclear medicine, I have a deep appreciation for the work that Cynthia does.

In just a few moments, I'm going to join Roger, Duncan, and Andrea Veil for a short dialogue. But before I do, I want to thank you, the heart of the U.S. NRC as well as regulators around the world for what you do for nuclear safety and for what you are doing to enable the safe deployment and safe use of nuclear technologies around the globe.

This is a unique moment in time, a special opportunity to make the difference and meet the moment before us. And you're on the way to doing just that. You are making a difference, but we can do more.

Each and every day, what you do has positive impacts here and around the world. What you do through your work will help make the world safer. Your work will help countries become more self-reliant, more secure, and more energy independent. Your work will help provide incredibly effective medicines to cure diseases here and around the

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globe.

What you do will help countries provide food. Your work will help people around the world who've never had electricity or clean water get it, which will also provide many more opportunities for children to grow, learn, and prosper.

So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your work. Because of what you do, plants are safe. They're safe to build and safe to operate. Your efforts, your public service, your passion for what nuclear safety regulation is about here and around the world provides "reasonable assurance of adequate protection" and enables the safe deployment and safe use of nuclear technologies.

Keep in mind the words of President Reagan, President Kennedy, and even my mom as you continue your selfless service and make a difference meeting this moment in time. Consider what you can do each day to help your organization, to empower those you work with to be the best version of themselves, and to improve yourself in ways that allow you to help make others successful in what they do.

When you do those things, when you live those things, good things happen, and success for you and for your organization, for people here, and around the world will be the byproduct.

Thank you for your time and attention this morning. And we'll get on with the fireside chat here in a moment.

(Applause.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Are we good?

MS. VEIL: Yes.

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COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: All right, so, good morning. Kind of wish we were more in a circle, that's okay, they can see us this way.

So, I want to thank you so much for agreeing to be here today, Rogerio, Duncan. You know, it means a lot to me. I wanted to be sure that we honored what you do and the programs that you represent the right way.

So, I've got a couple of questions for you. And then, I have something I'm going to give them later, too. So, we've got about what, 15 minutes?

Rogerio, I'm going to start with you, if that's okay. You know, you've been an inspector for decades, right? And knew almost from the beginning what you wanted to do, that you wanted to be a resident inspector immediately when you started your career.

And I don't know if a calling like that is something that happens frequently or not, but it happened to you. So, what would you say to some of our new hires or someone looking to start a career at the NRC? Or, maybe looking for a place to land inside the NRC where they could make a difference, you know, why should they consider being a resident inspector?

MR. REYES: Commissioner, I've been a resident inspector for a long time. But prior to resident inspection, I was an engineer. I started at Region I as the -- in the division in the reactor -- division of safety, reactor safety. We reviewed calculations. We reviewed modifications. It was great work.

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Later, I also did an assignment under Andrea here at headquarters in the engineer division. Again, outstanding work, it's all outstanding work. But, however, there was always something missing, always something. I had never seen a reactor. I had never seen fuel movement. I had never seen an operating reactor startup, trip.

That was always the part that was missing, even though I was reviewing all these calculations and all that. Once I entered the resident inspector program, I was able to see all these things. I was able to relate more to what I was actually doing in the past better.

What I would say to new people coming into the agency is consider the resident inspection program. To me, having worked different jobs at NRC, the resident inspector job is the best job in the agency.

In addition to last week, I saw an announcement where the compensation for resident inspectors is now being increased for retention. Not only is it one of the best jobs in the agency, it's one of the best paid jobs in the agency to the grade now. And I'm actually considering going back in.

(Laughter.)

MR. REYES: But that's what I would say. Get some resident inspection plant under you. Maybe a second plant. Then, anything else, any other job that you do in the agency will make much more sense.

Well, when you all have that feeling that I had, that something was missing, any job at NRC that you do after resident inspection, even a second, third term, you will be better at it, you

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will be more efficient at it. That's what I would recommend, resident inspection program job at NRC.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes, I was going to follow up, and you started -- you hit on it a little bit, that from what I have been able to tell the people who have come to work for me, the ones who had the resident inspector background just seem to be -- not that they were that ahead, but they seem to be -- they had a broader, you know, depth of knowledge about things that was going on. And it was easier for them to really get into the flow. Right?

MR. REYES: Right.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: You know, because working in a Commission office is different as you know, people know. But, yes, so that's an important point. Thank you for that.

So, Duncan, I'm going to come to you. Pretty much the same kind of question, I mean, you found your calling to be the same thing, right? Except you're in the materials space.

MR. WHITE: Right.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: And you've, I mean, since I've been at the agency, everywhere I've been at the Agreement States are, you know, CRCPD and everything like that, you're the guy. I mean, you're the legend. You're the person. Right?

And so, what would you tell someone, same kind of question that I gave Rogerio, what would you tell someone who is looking for a potential career, maybe looking to come to the NRC or trying to find their place within the agency? Why should they look at what you do?

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MR. WHITE: As a health physicist, materials side, the program is, to me, always very interesting because it's just the sheer diversity of things that are done there. You have commercial uses, medical uses. You have research going on. You have decommissioning going on, you have uranium mills. All this falls into the materials side of the house.

There's a lot going on there. And as a, you know, health physicist, you're often faced with some challenging things because you're working sometimes with small quantities, and sometimes very large quantities, of rad material. And they're going through different processes, being, you know, commercial irradiator, a fusion device, or whatever it is. So, you have, you know, all these opportunities.

We heard about medical this morning. I mean, the medical has been a growth area and very, very interesting area to be involved with. And that's something that I think that makes it very attractive to me and the people who have gotten into the health physics field about that.

I think the other thing, you know, being at the NRC, you know, you're working in an area where -- you know, with materials that impact people every day. I mean, thousands of people receive diagnostic or therapeutic radiation doses, you know, radiographers throughout their everyday, ensuring gas lines, bridges, everything are done, you know, are safe and secure for us to all use.

So, there's a lot of, you know, rad materials used all the time on that. And I think that's something to remind people -- to

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remind, you know, someone who's new and coming in, you have an impact when you come, and you have an impact when you do your job, it being, you know, doing licensing or doing inspection or, you know, sealed source and device repair, whatever that may be.

And it can be, you know, again, at the NRC, even in an Agreement State. You mentioned Agreement States, they do the same work the NRC does. I think that's very, very important. So, as I said, I think that's something that I think is very important to tell people.

And, again, the last thing about this, NRC is a great place to work, too. I think that's another thing, too. I think we should acknowledge that. And I think one thing -- I used to work for the State of New Jersey and I came to the NRC, one thing was because of that -- more opportunity for better training, opportunity to do more different things. And it's certainly -- it's the opportunity to, you know, to improve your career. And, again, I think that this is something to let people know that, you know, that those opportunities are there and they take advantage of those.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes, and one of the things I've learned, and I had a little bit of background at the state level, but I did not realize just how involved that the materials side is, not just -- I mean, the Agreement State program alone, I mean, holy cow, what y'all do working with them. And, quite honestly, what they do to help us. I mean, because they're a big value to us.

MR. WHITE: Right.

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COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: But what you also do around the world, you know, helping -- doing things before we really even have, like, formal agreements in place. Right? Y'all are helping people get things started and protecting sources and all that kind of thing.

So, it's incredible work that we all do and we need more like you. And, you know, we're embarking on trying to do that. So, thank you so much.

Andrea, do you have a question for them or for me?

MS. VEIL: I actually have both. Would you like me to start with you or would you like me to start with Duncan?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Whatever you wish.

MS. VEIL: Okay, I'm going to start with you. Okay, first question. Commissioner Wright, thank you for your servant leadership. Can you provide perspective on leadership culture of the NRC that will be needed to meet the moment? Specifically, selecting leaders, their development, and accountability, to ensure those they lead are producing safe, quality, and timely results.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes, thank you for the question. You know, one of the things that I find that's important, and I've found in my life that's important, is, you have to have people in positions of -- in leadership positions that, one, are encouragers, one. Right? They work to try to help the people around them get better.

But they also have to have a backbone, and they've got to be able to say no. They've got to be able to put the brakes on stuff when it's not going right. And sometimes you can get too friendly with

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your employees. Right? And there's a balance that has to be struck.

And, you know, I've worked very hard over my career to try to find that balance and strike that balance. And when you -- when it's working right and you're empowering your team, and they get going, you just back off. Let them go because they've performed.

And if they have an issue, we can talk it through. But it takes that acknowledgment from the -- and recognition by the person in charge what their role is and what their role is not as well.

I hope that answers the question.

MS. VAIL: Yes. Would you like another?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Wherever you want to go. We have guests, too.

MS. VEIL: Okay, second question for you.

Thank you for the Commission's collaboration on Part 53 (audio interference) delivered last week. What are the next steps?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: What was that last part? I didn't hear you.

MS. VEIL: Pardon?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I didn't hear that last part.

MS. VEIL: What are the next steps?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: With Part 53?

MS. VEIL: Yes.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, it's going to go back to staff right now. We've got, like, a six-month review. When it comes back -- and, hopefully, you know, if I could draw it up myself, I would hope

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that staff is going to engage with stakeholders as they're crafting, you know, doing their work over the next six months, and then send something back up to the Commission then.

And, you know, we'll have 20 -- I think it's 20 days to -- business days to review it. And, hopefully, we'll have something that can move pretty quick.

I believe that we got a lot of momentum. The Commission offices were incredibly, incredibly -- they worked very hard. It's one of the better experiences that I've seen in recent memory. And I'm very proud of not just the Commissioners, my colleagues, but their teams working with each other.

It was -- and the people who were giving input, too, staff and as well as stakeholders. It was a good, good piece of work. So, hopefully, we can get it done and out. That's what we want. That's the next step.

MS. VEIL: And, next, for Duncan.

Duncan, what do you find the most exciting or promising about the future of fusion?

MR. WHITE: Well, that's a very interesting question. Growing up, I lived in New Jersey, as many people know. And I grew up ten miles from Princeton Plasma Physics Labs. So, we always heard the joke about fusion's always 20 years in the future.

And, you know, as a young health physicist, I got the opportunity to visit that Princeton Plasma Physics Lab. And probably by destiny, why I'm involved doing it today, I was, you know, very

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involved with that.

I think of big milestones, what happened a couple of years ago at Lawrence Livermore where they actually were able to have a positive net reaction with fusion.

So, again, I think there's -- you have to temper that. There's a long way to go with it. But a lot of research the last 50, 60 years on plasma and how that works. But to make a plant that's going to actually put power out on a grid or do some other commercial operations, there's a lot of work that has to be done there.

And you know, I think there may be, you know, 10, 20 years before see, like, really widespread. But I think there's, again, if you look at the progress over the last ten years, it's been rather significant. And, again, there's a lot of commercial investment, presence by DOE has encouraged that. So, I think the future is very bright going forward.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes, the future is here. It's coming fast.

MR. WRIGHT: Yes.

MS. VEIL: And I'll give you the last question, Commissioner Wright, so you'll have time to go in your bag I see you just pulled out.

So, last question for you. As a member of the industry and the father of two daughters in college who are interested in a profession in the nuclear industry, what would you advise them about joining the industry or even with the agency?

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COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Again, I didn't hear the last part of that.

MS. VEIL: With the agency. About joining the industry or even joining the NRC?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, I'll tell you, I'm just going to give you my personal experience. I wish I had known about what was going on in the energy space when I was coming through, because it -- the world can be your oyster there. There are so many different directions you can go. And, I mean, I was well past grown.

I did encourage my children, you know, that they needed to really understand and get involved in that space in school and see if it's something that appealed to them. You know, my youngest son is the closest one that got to it, you know. And, you know, he found math. And, you know, I don't know where he got it, but I'm glad he did. I think data science is going to be something he could use. And, you know, he could do it here, he could do it at any place in the energy sector.

So, you know, parents, encourage your kids. I mean, that's what we have to do. Just get them -- challenge them. You know? And, you know, help -- I mean, just the encouragement is what -- you know, I never told them no to anything. You know, if they wanted to play baseball, if they wanted to do soccer, if they wanted to do dance, fine. But you've got to give me good grades. That's your job. Your job is to give me good grades. You know?

So, and that's what they did. And then they got -- you

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know, there's a way to strike that balance, too. To be a parent and to try to be supportive as a friend as you can, too.

So, I hope that answered it. And in the time we've got, I need to -- as we wrap this up, I want to thank Duncan and Rogerio and Marilyn. I have something for you I'm going to give you, and I'll get Marilyn hers later.

But, for each of you, I have a little piece of swag. I had a plaque made, Rogerio, if you'd pass this down to Rogerio right there, Duncan.

And then, Duncan, I have one for you as well. It is a recognition. It's called the Commissioner Wright Selfless Service Award.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Something that they can display on their desk. And, you know, it's got the quote from -- that Ronald Reagan had on his desk on there, the one that I keep on my desk. I put that quote on there as well.

And it's just something to commemorate today and to thank you for taking the time and to be willing to be recognized because today is about you, it's not about me. It's about what the people who do what you do in this agency are about.

And, you know, from the bottom of my heart and from my fellow colleagues here, we thank you and we thank those of the NRC who follow in your steps and do what you do for your service. And we look forward to many more successful years as we turn the corner and where

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it's going next. So, thank you.

MR. WHITE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. VEIL: Thanks for that.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record  
at 9:50 a.m.)

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