

UNITED STATES

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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BRIEFING ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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TUESDAY,
JUNE 4, 2024

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The Commission met in the Commissioners' Hearing Room,
at 10:01 a.m. EDT, Christopher T. Hanson, Chair, presiding.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

CHRISTOPHER T. HANSON, Chair

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner

ANNIE CAPUTO, Commissioner

BRADLEY R. CROWELL, Commissioner

NRC STAFF:

KELLY BARRIE, Chief, Headquarters Operations Branch B, Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO)

CHRIS CRAIGHEAD, Team Lead, Agency Culture Team, Office of the Executive Director for Operations (OEDO)

ERIC DILWORTH, Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer, OCHCO

MATTHEW EMRICH, Chief, Reactor Technical Training Branch, OCHCO

SCOTT MORRIS, Deputy Executive Director for Reactor and Preparedness Programs, OEDO

MEREDITH NEUBAUER, Senior Civil Rights Specialist, Civil Rights Program, Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR)

ALSO PRESENT:

DALE YEILDING, President of Chapter 208 of the National Treasury Employees Union

PROCEEDINGS

10:01 a.m.

1 CHAIR HANSON: Good morning, everyone. I convene
2 the Commission's public meeting on Human Capital and Equal Employment
3 Opportunity. Twice a year, we meet to get an update on strategic human
4 capital initiatives and equal employment opportunity activities to strengthen
5 the NRC workforce.

6 Our last meeting was in December. Today, we're going to
7 be discussing topics that are very important to ensuring NRC employees have
8 a safe working environment where they can pursue their career goals and help
9 fulfill the Agency mission. Before we begin, I'd like to ask my fellow
10 Commissions if they have any initial remarks they'd like to make.

11 (No audible response.)

12 CHAIR HANSON: Okay, thank you. So with that, I'll hand
13 is over to Scott Morris, our Deputy Executive Director for Reactor and
14 Preparedness Programs to provide his opening remarks.

15 MR. MORRIS: Thanks, Chair. Good morning,
16 Commissioners Wright, Caputo, and Crowell. Welcome to the NRC staff and
17 others joining us in person and online today.

18 We're here to share the current status and progress the
19 NRC staff has made in the areas of human capital management,
20 organizational culture development, and equal employment opportunity. Let
21 me begin by acknowledging the latest 2023 Best Places to Work in the Federal
22 Government rankings. These rankings are based on the results of the

1 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, or FEVS as well call it, conducted in
2 roughly May... well, last year, it was between May and June.

3 And for 2023, the NRC was ranked number 23 out of 26 mid-
4 size agencies which is lower than our 2022 ranking. Although this latest
5 ranking is obviously disappointing, I want to stress that in the past year, we
6 have taken and are continuing to take significant steps to improve our
7 organizational culture, including targeted actions to increase employee
8 engagement and satisfaction. I and the Agency's senior leadership team
9 recognize that much more needs to be done to build trust and to ensure our
10 employees are empowered and involved in the decisions that affect their work.

11 I'm absolutely confident that the genuine self-reflection we
12 are doing engaging in the conversations we're having with our staff throughout
13 the Agency and most importantly the actions we're taking will result in a more
14 inclusive and innovative work environment in which all employees feel valued
15 and inspired to actively collaborate to ensure the success of our Agency. I
16 believe that individuals join our Agency because of our important mission.
17 But they won't stay if they feel their contributions are not valued and they are
18 not part of a collaborative team. So I'll start with the Office of the Chief
19 Human Capital Officer or OCHCO.

20 Those staff are keenly focused on improving the
21 effectiveness of Agency-wide recruiting, hiring, and training new employees.
22 For example, they're actively working to minimize the time it takes between
23 posting an external vacancy and onboarding a new staff member and
24 implement efficiencies in this multi-step process. OCHCO staff are also

1 actively supporting our current employees through professional development,
2 cross training, and promotional opportunities.

3 Again, while we acknowledge much more work remains,
4 OCHCO is already creating internal efficiencies by aligning workload to
5 available resources, improving customer service to partner offices, focusing
6 on improved data collection and visualization, and collaborating with the
7 program and regional offices to ensure critical staff training and development
8 needs are met. OCHCO and the Executive Director for Operations Office are
9 also actively assessing the recommendations from our recently completed
10 third party strategic workforce planning process evaluation with the intent to
11 better integrate strategic workforce planning into the Agency's overall
12 planning, budgeting, and performance management efforts. As you know,
13 improving and sustaining organizational health is an NRC strategic goal and
14 a significant Agency priority.

15 And we remain committed to fostering a culture in which the
16 workforce is fully engaged, adaptable, and receptive to change. And where
17 we attract, develop, and maintain a high performing, diverse, skilled workforce
18 that meets our needs now and in the future. Senior Agency leadership with
19 support from OCHCO, the Agency culture team, and the Office of Small
20 Business and Civil Rights play an essential role in advancing this goal at the
21 Agency.

22 Within the Office of the Executive Director for Operations,
23 our newly reinvigorated Agency culture team works with management and
24 staff throughout the Agency to facilitate the NRC's attainment of its desired

1 culture and improve overall organizational health. Over the past year,
2 members of the culture team visited with each headquarters and regional
3 office, analyzed historical organizational culture inventor, and Federal
4 Employee Viewpoint Survey data and previous actions taken in response to
5 those surveys, explicitly defined and communicated our desired culture
6 established, and implemented the Agency culture leader model, and initiated
7 various other enterprise-wide culture improvement activities.

8 The culture team in close coordination with the recently
9 appointed culture leaders in each office and region along with a network of
10 over 200 volunteer change agents are dedicated to increasing employee
11 engagement and job satisfaction, knowing that doing so will improve overall
12 Agency effectiveness and efficiency in achieving our important mission. We
13 recognize that the primary driver of employee engagement is effective
14 leadership. And I along with all senior agency leaders are committed to
15 building a culture of accountability and transparency, a culture centered on
16 trust.

17 The culture leader model was established to improve
18 leadership accountability for enhancing the work culture and overall
19 organizational health of the Agency. As of the end of April, our culture
20 leaders who are designated executives or senior managers in each office
21 worked with their staff to develop culture improvement plans specific to each
22 headquarter and regional office. Senior Agency leadership will continue to
23 focus on making progress in organizational health improvement as part of our
24 enterprise risk management efforts.

1 And I just want to call an audible. If you're a culture leader
2 or a change agent and you're in the room, would you just please maybe stand
3 and just be recognized for the work that you all are doing? We really
4 appreciate it.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. MORRIS: So you can see we've got -- and that's --
7 thank you so much. And that's just here with us. We've obviously got plenty
8 -- many, many, many more people online as well. And I don't want to -- I want
9 to recognize them as well.

10 Last but not least, the Office of Small Business and Civil
11 Rights, or SBCR, supports the NRC mission by enabling a diverse and
12 inclusive workforce and advancing equal employment opportunities for both
13 employees and applicants, embracing diversity which includes supporting
14 accessibility for all, not only enhances the breadth of perspectives and
15 experiences within our workforce but also encourages the active elicitation
16 and consideration of different views in ways of thinking and fosters a more
17 inclusive environment. Today, representatives from OCHCO, the Agency
18 culture team, and SBCR will be providing information on these important
19 initiatives that we're pursuing to ensure the NRC is an employer of choice that
20 not only offers the opportunity to support a vital mission but also enables a
21 healthy organizational culture in a diverse, inclusive, and innovative work
22 environment. Next slide, please.

23 So now let me introduce members of our panel presenting
24 today. First, Eric Dilworth, our acting Chief Human Capital Officer will provide

1 an overview of strategic human capital management at the NRC. Eric will be
2 followed by Kelly Barrie, Chief of OCHCO's Human Resources Operations
3 Branch who will discuss several changes implemented recently to enhance
4 operational efficiencies.

5 Next, Matthew Emrich, Chief of the Reactor Technology
6 Training Branch, will discuss changes at the Technical Training Center to
7 increase instructor capacity. Matthew will be followed by Chris Craighead,
8 our Agency culture team leader, who will discuss specific actions we are taking
9 to achieve our desired culture. And finally, Meredith Neubauer, a Senior Civil
10 Rights Specialist in the Office of SBCR, will provide an update on activities to
11 advance civil rights and diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. Next slide,
12 please. Thank you and I will turn it over to Eric.

13 MR. DILWORTH: Thank you, Scott. I'm pleased to share
14 activities of our office covering the entire human resource portfolio. The
15 briefing today will also include information on enhancing the NRC culture and
16 equal employment opportunity activities. Next slide.

17 OCHCO activities are guided by the human capital priorities
18 in the human capital operating plan. The HCOP is updated annually and
19 submitted to the Office of Personnel Management. The HCOP provides the
20 plan for how the Agency will recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and highly
21 qualified workforce.

22 The strategic workforce planning process is an assessment
23 tool which is more specific to staffing and filling skill gaps. Offices begin the
24 process with an environmental scan to predict what skills are needed to meet

1 mission needs now and into the future. The annual SWP has been on hold
2 for two years while an independent evaluation was conducted; this evaluation
3 was concluded earlier this year. Staff are currently reviewing the findings and
4 developing implementation plans. Absent an annual SWP, offices are
5 continuing to assess the environment and monitor attrition to identify skills
6 required to meet mission needs.

7 An example of how we use SWP data is the identification of
8 the 801 engineering job series and also the 1306 health physicist job series
9 as critical skills that we need to fill for the Agency. We targeted recruitment
10 towards these series. And in FY '22, we onboarded 76 new employees in the
11 801 job series and also another 18 in the 1306 health physicist job series.

12 And in FY '23, we onboarded 92 employees in the
13 engineering job series and 19 in the health physicist job series. We also
14 continue to onboard a cohort of recent college graduates in engineering and
15 science skills for the Nuclear Regulatory Apprentice Network, NRAN.
16 Twenty-five NRANers will be onboarded this summer, and this will be our third
17 cohort.

18 Other entry level pathways include our summer hire
19 programs where we often convert those summer hires to co-op employees
20 and then find permanent placements for them in the future once they graduate.
21 A program called Embrace that's been developed and is executive sponsored
22 by the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. The Embrace program focuses
23 on hosting activities throughout the summer, targeted at summer hires and
24 co-op students, but it's also open to all NRC employees.

1 Some of the activities include technical sessions, meet and
2 greets, game nights, and more activities like this aimed to integrate those
3 summer hires and co-ops into the NRC culture. While recruiting and hiring is
4 a top priority, we also monitor attrition to identify why people leave the NRC.

5 On a quarterly basis, we brief this to the Human Capital
6 Council. And through this, we also obtain input from senior leaders. While
7 many employees retire, the primary reason for non-retirement attrition is that
8 employees are seeking out opportunities.

9 Our learning and development division is focused on
10 ensuring that the employees we have on board receive the training needed.
11 We also improve the knowledge management program to better position
12 employees for career advancement. OCHCO is also working toward gaining
13 efficiencies in the staffing and recruiting area.

14 NRC, like all federal agencies, we track our time to hire and
15 we strive to meet OPM standards. We're working to ensure our data is
16 accurate and currently estimate that the hiring process averages
17 approximately 130 days for NRC. The government averages 101 days. So
18 we have a goal there that we can strive towards. One of the ways we can do
19 this is through a process improvement event that will be aimed at reducing our
20 time to hire and also enhance overall effectiveness.

21 To round out my discussion this morning, I want share some
22 analytics that we use in OCHCO that we also share with the Human Capital
23 Council. Next slide.

24 As you can see, the average numbers of years that an

1 employee stays on board past their retirement eligibility has remained
2 constant at about five years and this continues to trend up. Next slide.

3 When we look at separation and agency attrition rates, the
4 graphic shows the outlier years of 2016 and 2017, when early out and buyouts
5 were offered. It also shows that the attrition rate for 2021 is comparable to
6 recent years, between 26 and 27%. In 2022, the attrition rates were higher.
7 Many staff worked during COVID and as we re-entered the office, more
8 employees retired. As you can see, our attrition rate averages around 7, that
9 is actually around the government-wide attrition rate, between 7 and 9%.
10 Next slide.

11 Comparing gains with separations shows historically low
12 hiring rates while the Agency was reducing in size and then increased hiring
13 as FT allocations leveled off. However, some signs that the Agency has
14 leveled off in the last three years, external hiring has not kept pace with
15 attrition. Our increased focus on external hiring aims to reduce that deficit.

16 We expect to end the fiscal year with more employees
17 onboarded than that have separated for the year. Next slide. In FY '23, the
18 Agency hired 279 new employees. To date, we have onboarded 142 new
19 employees with 83 pending onboarding.

20 In addition to the external hiring actions, we've also
21 completed over 350 internal movements through promotions and career
22 development reassignments of current employees. External hiring numbers
23 are projected to increase and our most recent hire expo will assist in
24 increasing our onboard numbers.

1 Kelly will provide more on the expo in her briefing. And
2 enterprise risk for staffing has been established to ensure the Agency
3 prioritizes hiring needs and fill critical vacancies. This hiring risk is reviewed
4 by Agency leadership at quarterly performance reviews.

5 Kelly will discuss some of the mitigating strategies in use
6 during her portion of the briefing. Next slide. To be successful, the NRC
7 needs to have both technical staff and also staff in our corporate areas. Due
8 to dedicated work of OCHCO staff in collaboration with leaders across the
9 Agency, we continue to position ourselves and meet future hiring needs.

10 As we onboard new employees, we also remain focused on
11 current staff. Knowledge management and cross training continue to be
12 important strategies used to meet mission requirements. Our hiring strategy
13 includes hiring new staff at all grade levels while balancing the need to retain
14 our current staff through professional development and promotion
15 opportunities.

16 I am confident that we are on the right path to enhance the
17 effectiveness of all human resource programs to support the NRC mission.
18 Next slide. Now we'll turn the briefing over to Kelly Barrie to discuss recent
19 changes to enhance operational effectiveness.

20 MS. BARRIE: Thank you, Eric. Good morning. My
21 name is Kelly Barrie. I'm the branch chief for recruiting and staffing in the
22 Human Resources Operation and Policy Division. Thank you for this
23 opportunity to provide an overview of OCHCO's efforts to improve its
24 operational efficiencies.

1 In particular, I'll highlight the recent reorganization of the
2 Human Resources Operations and Policy Division known as HROP and
3 HROP's efforts to improve data collection and visualization. For context,
4 HROP is responsible for the delivery of human resources, policy, benefits,
5 award administration, and is the heart of hiring NRC employees. Prioritizing
6 hiring and filling critical vacancies across the agency is an enterprise risk the
7 agency is closely monitoring and mitigating to ensure the Agency is well
8 positioned to fulfill our regulatory responsibilities and maintain the necessary
9 services that are critical for meeting our mission.

10 Given the Agency's hiring goals and efforts, HROP's
11 workload had grown exponentially while the resources have not. This led to
12 backlogs, delayed deliverables, unbalanced workloads, increased errors, and
13 decreased customer satisfaction. These issues also led to morale and
14 burnout concerns for the OCHCO team whose goal is to provide exceptional
15 customer service to the Agency staff.

16 In 2023, OCHCO conducted an in-depth review of all
17 workforce functions to identify work misalignments, inefficiencies with
18 processes, under resourced needs, and loss of institutional knowledge and
19 experience. OCHCO employees were invited to contribute to this office-wide
20 review by identifying priority areas where we could gain efficiencies and
21 improve operations. Through the thoughtful input of our staff, the leadership
22 team was able to conduct an analysis of the data and collaboratively develop
23 proposed organizational structure designed to restore our capacity to deliver
24 timely and accurate results, enhance stakeholder satisfaction, and create an

1 environment where employees are happy, growing professionally, and
2 motivated.

3 The first phase of the reorganization went into effect on April
4 7th of 2024. At a high level, work activities were all aligned in the organization
5 under a series of business lines which allows for better coverage in the areas
6 that are one FTE deep, resulting in available bench strengths for spikes in
7 workload, through cross training within the business line. Additionally, the
8 changes result in more balanced workloads and reduce workload stress.

9 Our ultimate goal is to add increased customer satisfaction
10 to the list of successes. To add efficiency, a dedicated processing and quality
11 control team was created. The processing and quality control team serves
12 as a centralized focal point for processing all headquarter HR actions into each
13 applicable HR system.

14 This team of HR specialists are exclusively responsible for
15 headquarters HR data entry, data accuracy, and data integrity. A
16 consolidated staffing and recruitment branch was created to address
17 disjointed work and operational inefficiencies. Through consolidation under
18 the human resources operations business line approach, OCHCO created
19 branches dedicated to a single function which results in aligned
20 responsibilities for all branch staff, optimized workload distribution, and
21 increased efficiency.

22 Additional consolidation occurred under the recognition
23 business line with all recognition programs rehomed into the benefits and
24 work/life programs branch which provides dedicated resources for effective

1 implementation and management of these programs. This change is
2 expected to result in increased customer satisfaction by improving the
3 timeliness of recognizing the exceptional efforts and contributions of NRC
4 employees. The reorganization also established a special hiring and
5 appointing authorities branch.

6 Establishment of this branch results in a centralized line of
7 business focused on special hiring authorities and appointment programs
8 such as student hires, veteran hires, and the hiring of people with disabilities.
9 It also centralizes knowledge and subject matter experts under one line of
10 business which will save time and resources in meeting agency needs and
11 resolving issues related to these critical programs. Finally, we created an
12 advisory services line of business, enhancing OCHCO's timely compliance
13 with regulatory requirements.

14 This line of business includes proactive process updates,
15 development and update of standard operating procedures, and creation of
16 job aides to be used by human resources specialists to comply with the latest
17 legal developments and federal best practices. The benefit of this change is
18 to increase the consistency and standardization across staffing and
19 recruitment branch and an in-depth knowledge repository for more efficient
20 operations. These strategic changes are designed to create efficiencies by
21 better aligning work, improving the customer experience, and enhancing
22 employee satisfaction while fostering a culture of excellence within the
23 organization. Next slide, please.

24 OCHCO's pursuit of excellence is tied to the feedback we

1 routinely gather from our NRC partners. As Eric mentioned, our focus this
2 year will be on gaining efficiencies and operations for staffing and recruitment.
3 I mentioned the enterprise risk for staffing earlier. In implementing our risk
4 mitigation strategy, OCHCO identified a methodology to better monitor the
5 operational phases of hiring activities to identify areas where we can gain
6 efficiencies.

7 This is done through integrating high quality timely hiring
8 data from different HR systems and presenting the information using power BI
9 dashboards to visually identify opportunities for improvement in operational
10 processes. This strategy allows OCHCO to identify the precise locations of
11 bottlenecks within our operational framework, identify areas where the agency
12 may be falling short of its human capital objectives, and pinpoint opportunities
13 for enhancement and refinement. Additionally, OCHCO will be able to
14 conduct analysis on each step of the hiring process, what we refer to as time
15 to hire.

16 The goal will be to improve the quality and speed of Agency
17 hiring to fill all vacant positions. Through measuring and analysis of the
18 quality and timeliness of the hiring process, we can identify the causes of
19 Agency hiring issues and develop actions that will be taken to reduce them.
20 Improved data collection and visualization will help OCHCO communicate with
21 more clarity, precision, and transparency.

22 As part of our commitment to continuous improvement,
23 OCHCO is actively engaged in collaborative ventures with sister agencies by
24 pulling resources and expertise to explore and implement cutting edge data

1 visualization techniques and tools. Our objective is to harness the
2 transformative potential and advanced analytics to streamline consultation
3 processes, enhance organizational accountability, and power data driven
4 strategic decision making that drives sustained excellence and performance
5 across all facets of our operations. As you can see from the slide presented,
6 the importance of well-developed dashboards is to provide a quick high level
7 overview of areas that we can focus on.

8 This slide shows how age demographics have been moving
9 over the past eight years. A dashboard such as this could drive a
10 conversation regarding the need to ensure we have knowledge transfer from
11 a workforce where 24 percent are eligible to retire or a conversation on where
12 to target outreach efforts. OCHCO recognizes the efficiencies gained by
13 allowing us to connect with talented individuals who may be actively looking
14 for a new job and it helps build relationships with potential candidates.

15 And we want to continue dedicating resources for our
16 outreach programs. In early May of this year, we conducted our second
17 annual NRC hiring expo where we reached over 550 people interested in
18 working for NRC and extended invitations to more than 70 applicants to
19 interview. The success of these events brings awareness to career
20 opportunities with NRC, and large numbers of applicants make it a very
21 efficient way to fill our vacancies.

22 OCHCO and our partners in SBCR work closely to maximize
23 opportunities to broaden outreach to minority serving institutions, historically
24 Black colleges and universities, and other target populations and will utilize

1 the university champions, NRC university alumni ambassadors, diversity
2 management advisory committees, NRCAN cohorts and resident inspector
3 pools to help staff booths at future events. OCHCO promotes vacancies on
4 various job boards such as American Nuclear Society, Corporate Gray which
5 targets veterans, Roadtechs, LinkedIn, and Handshake which targets college
6 students. A success to highlight is the use of NRC's social media platforms
7 to post hiring events and job vacancies with links to USAJOBS to view open
8 positions and allow applicants to directly apply.

9 In the last year in partnership with the Office of Public
10 Affairs, there were 185 postings across platforms such as Facebook,
11 Instagram, LinkedIn, and X where over 272,000 people viewed the post and
12 17,398 people engaged with the post, whether it was clicking on the link,
13 sharing it, or commenting on it. This shows a volume of people interested in
14 opportunities with NRC. OCHCO is dedicated to improving training on HR-
15 related topics.

16 Recognizing that some of our challenges stem from lack of
17 knowledge and understanding in this area, OCHCO is committed to enhancing
18 enterprise both within OCHCO as we have hired many new people and in our
19 partner offices. Therefore, some of OCHCO's training will aim to develop
20 understanding of OCHCO's roles and functions and the information OCHCO
21 needs from hiring managers to timely process actions. OCHCO's expanded
22 training will also provide fundamental HR guidance essential for effective
23 career management.

24 OCHCO plans to provide additional information to hiring

1 officials on topics such as position management, classification principles,
2 hiring authorities and recruiting flexibility. Last but not least, OCHCO plans
3 to develop training for all employees on topics like successfully applying to
4 vacancy announcements, how to read leave and earning statements, and the
5 importance of the SF-50. OCHCO is dedicated to hearing and responding to
6 feedback from our valued customers on how we can improve.

7 We understand the critical importance of ongoing dialogue
8 and collaboration and addressing key concerns in driving organizational
9 success. As such, we are steadfast in our commitment to maintaining regular
10 meetings to facilitate open communication, exchange of ideas, and effective
11 problem solving. Next slide. And now I'll turn it over to Matt to discuss
12 increasing instructor capacity.

13 MR. EMRICH: Thank you, Kelly. Good morning. My
14 name is Matt Emrich and I'm the Chief for the Reactor Technology Training
15 Branch or RTTB at the Technical Training Center, TTC.

16 It is my pleasure to be here this morning to provide the
17 Commission with an update on recent hiring activities in OCHCO's Human
18 Resources Training and Development Division and how they have increased
19 our capacity to execute the training and development mission. Through
20 strategic hiring, a renewed focus on establishing bench strength and
21 continued collaboration with the program and regional offices, our division
22 continues to be ready to support the learning and development needs of our
23 staff, both now and in the future. Next slide, please. Over the past five
24 years, the Reactor Technology Training Branch has lost 8 of its instructors

1 due to retirements.

2 Based on age demographics, this was not a surprise. The
3 initial plan to mitigate the impacts of these losses was to double encumber
4 positions 6 to 12 months in advance of planned retirement dates to allow
5 knowledge transfer activities to occur. Based on the overall impact of the
6 COVID-19 public health emergency on many HR and Agency initiatives, this
7 mitigative strategy took some time to become a reality.

8 I'm happy to report that as of today, we're currently at our
9 full staffing levels in RTTB. So how did we get here, what worked well, and
10 what areas do we need to continue to keep on our radar? Our initial hiring
11 strategy was to post open until filled vacancy announcements on USAJOBS
12 that were available to both internal and external candidates.

13 This strategy allowed the HR -- I'm sorry, the hiring manager
14 to request periodic hiring certificates from the designated HR specialist and
15 helped eliminate significant rework in a period when it was known that we'd
16 be looking for multiple qualified applicants. The initial posting was kept open
17 for a period of 12 months and a second one for a period of a 6 months. We
18 made the decision to post the instructor vacancies as OPM Job Series 1701
19 general education and training at the GG-13 grade level.

20 Posting in this manner allowed us to broaden our candidate
21 pool due to some of the flexibility afforded by not having a hard and fast degree
22 requirement. We also utilized social media platforms, i.e. LinkedIn, to reach
23 a broader population regarding opportunities for employment with the NRC.
24 Also as an additional knowledge management strategy, we obtained approval

1 for and onboarded a previous senior reactor technology instructor for 12
2 months as a rehired annuitant to have additional mentor support for newly
3 hired instructional staff. Next slide, please.

4 As a result of the hiring strategies just discussed and a little
5 bit of luck, we've been able to recruit, interview, and onboard a wealth of
6 talented individuals into RTTB. This slide outlines the background of the
7 individuals that have been onboarded into the branch within the last three
8 years. All new reactor technology instructors bring with them licensed
9 operations experience and additionally many bring previous operations
10 training experience, either from the Navy or from the commercial nuclear
11 industry.

12 Additionally, they bring diverse knowledge across the
13 different light water reactor designs which allows us to address near term
14 training demands of the Agency while in parallel aligning these new instructors
15 to other vendor designs for cross certification. This allows us to build internal
16 bench strength across the technologies. Since being back to 100 percent
17 staffing, we've been able to schedule an additional offering of the
18 Westinghouse reactor series training to meet increased demand based on
19 recent Agency-wide hiring. Next slide, please.

20 We're extremely fortunate to have recruited so much talent
21 over the past three years, yet there's some potential issues that warrant
22 observation and consideration. For over a decade, the instructor staff in
23 HRTD had all been Grade 14 staff. We've begun filling instructor vacancies
24 as Grade 13 positions to more closely align with how program office and

1 regional offices are structured.

2 This structure embeds promotion potential in the branches,
3 but when dealing with a finite number of positions at the Grade 14 level, it
4 could potentially result in our instructional staff looking elsewhere for
5 promotion. Additionally, we'll continue to see losses in the instructor ranks
6 over the next several years based on retirements.

7 Part of the reason that we have continued to successfully
8 execute the mission over the past three years was our ability to double
9 encumber positions and allow knowledge transfer and training time for new
10 instructor hires. Even with the ability to recruit staff having operations and
11 training backgrounds from the industry, it still takes a minimum of 6 to 12
12 months to bring new instructors up to speed with a vendor design specific to
13 our training programs, provide cross training, and establish a baseline of
14 regulatory knowledge. We're also adding staff in specialized training areas
15 to support the increased demand for health physics and regulatory training.
16 A new health physics instructor started last year and an additional regulatory
17 skills position has been approved. Next slide, please.

18 The TTC is more than a simulator training facility. In fact,
19 most of the staff that we train never set foot in simulator at the TTC as part of
20 their training. Specialized technical training is offered in security, health
21 physics, regulatory skills, risk assessment in classrooms and labs at the TTC,
22 and offsite locations to support the qualification of staff from regional and
23 program offices and agreement states. HRTD prides itself on being strategic
24 partners with the regional and program offices.

1 We find ourselves collaborating more and more with our
2 stakeholders outside of OCHCO on matters related to staff training and
3 development, mentoring, course effectiveness, and training needs for both our
4 internal staff as well as personnel for the National Materials Program. Our
5 instructors based on their hundreds of hours of collective experience are
6 sought out by NRC staff to assess technical issues, support field inspections,
7 and assist in a variety of other activities. As an example, we've been
8 collaborating with regional staff to provide practical exercises using the
9 simulation facilities at the TTC to provide additional training to staff in the
10 resident inspector development program.

11 These sessions were a collaborative effort facilitated by both
12 regional inspector staff, headquarters operations officers, and TTC instructors.
13 The attendees were given classroom training on the expected competencies
14 necessary for event response and how to set up the communications networks
15 tying in all the necessary decision makers. Once the attendee has completed
16 the classroom training, we utilize the simulator and TTC staff playing the role
17 of a licensee control room team and allowed them to put into practice what
18 was presented to them.

19 TTC instructional staff also continue to broaden their areas
20 of expertise in both their technical capacities as well as their regulatory
21 knowledge, skills, and abilities. Reframing expectations for broader
22 qualifications at the staff level ensures that we have a deeper bench strength
23 which will allow us to be more agile to shifting demands in the future. Many
24 instructors are inspector qualified and can support a variety of inspections if

1 needed.

2 As our new staff continue to mature as instructors, many
3 plan to cross qualify as either an inspector or a licensed examiner. As we
4 expand these qualifications, we can provide even more support to the regions
5 and program offices moving forward while also benefitting from gaining
6 additional regulatory perspective that can be brought back to the classroom
7 and simulator environment. Next slide, please.

8 So what does our increased capacity mean for the future?
9 The instructional staff in HRTD continue to drive towards increasing the
10 knowledge, skills, and abilities of the staff that come to us for their training and
11 development. We continue to partner with the regional and program offices
12 to understand the training needs of staff to make the most out of the time they
13 spend in training. We strive to be a customer focused organization that takes
14 feedback from our stakeholders to improve our products, both internal course
15 offerings as well as contractor-led offerings that we manage as contracting
16 officers representatives.

17 A near term focus for our division is to improve out we seek
18 out and obtain actionable feedback on real and/or perceived performance
19 gaps from our stakeholders and then partner with them to tailor our training to
20 better meet their needs and improve performance. Next slide, please. Over
21 the past couple of years, we have observed an increase in the number and
22 scope of requests for training support from our international regulatory
23 counterparts via the Office of International Programs or OIP. We continue to
24 support these requests as resources allow.

1 For example, engagements with Canada, Poland, and
2 Japan. We also welcome international regulators in the training sessions that
3 we schedule for our internal staff as space allows. As our instructor
4 resources have grown, so has our ability to potentially support more of these
5 requests.

6 The industry has seen an increase in the procurement and
7 use of glass panel or touchscreen simulation technology. TTC simulator
8 engineering staff are currently collaborating with an outside vendor to obtain
9 similar technology to incorporate into our training programs. Glass panel
10 simulators provide increased flexibility for high training demands, significantly
11 reduce hardware replacement and maintenance costs, and potentially provide
12 a means to conduct smaller scale demonstrations using the simulator in virtual
13 training.

14 Additionally, this new technology serves as a potential host
15 environment for the simulation of advanced reactor designs. Our division
16 remains ready to support the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation on any
17 future requests for training development related to advanced reactors. We
18 also continue to pilot potential uses of virtual and augmented reality platforms
19 to determine potential use cases for our training. Next slide, please. I'll now
20 turn it over to Chris Craighead. Thank you.

21 MR. CRAIGHEAD: Thank you, Matt. My name is
22 Christopher Craighead. I'm the Agency culture team lead in the Office of the
23 Executive Director for Operations. It is with great pleasure that I'm here to
24 share with the Commission an update on our recent culture activities.

1 Culture is a heartbeat of an organization and at the very
2 center of any organization's culture is its people. I'm privileged to work with
3 such great mission driven people who are not just committed to protecting the
4 American people in their environment but also committed to restoring this
5 Agency as one of the top places to work in the federal government through its
6 culture. The NRC has a vast and rich history of establishing a strong culture
7 through the principles of good regulation, our organizational values or
8 ISOCER, and our leadership model traits.

9 While these principles, values, and traits still hold merit and
10 define our current culture today, within this rapidly evolving work environment
11 and regulatory landscape, it is time to bring them back to the forefront of our
12 business and cast them in a fresh light. My fellow panelists have helped paint
13 a picture of our evolving work environment. And we must ensure and next
14 wave of nuclear regulators can identify and represent these values, principles
15 and traits which will drive us to our ideal culture.

16 With that, I'm deeply honored to roll out the Agency's ideal
17 culture statement to you this morning. Next slide, please. As noted on the
18 slide here, we achieve mission excellence by fostering an ideal culture
19 centered on trust characterized by high engagement, mutual support, and a
20 sense of belonging. All employees demonstrate behaviors consistent with
21 the ISOCER values and fully embrace the traits established in the NRC
22 leadership model.

23 This statement in essence describes our goal in fostering an
24 ideal culture. It's an aspirational goal, and we're not there yet. But we are

1 working towards it.

2 And it's something we can achieve with the support and
3 cooperation from all levels of the Agency. The ideal culture statement directly
4 supports our goals and strategies outlined in the fiscal year 2022 through 2026
5 strategic plan. Namely, Organization Health Objective 1 which is foster an
6 organizational culture in which the workplace is engaged, adaptable, and
7 receptive to change and makes data driven and evidence-based decisions.

8 And Organizational Health Strategy 2.3.1 which states
9 ensure the Agency is an employer of choice that offers a work culture and
10 workplace environment that attracts and retains highly motivated employees
11 who are engaged, adaptable, high performing, and receptive to change. Our
12 most recent major step in the direction of this ideal culture was the
13 establishment of our culture leader model. Next slide, please. In December
14 of 2023, the Agency Culture Team or ACT for short implemented the culture
15 leader model as an Agency-wide initiative to promote constructive behaviors.
16 The model was in response to employee feedback and it was designed to
17 identify and address specific and unique challenges, barriers, and negative
18 sentiments concerning the culture of the agency as revealed in various data
19 sources, such as the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, or FEVS, and the
20 Organizational Culture Inventory Survey, or OCI.

21 Every program office was tasked with appointing an
22 experienced leader from the SES, where possible, to be accountable for
23 leading culture improvement efforts for their assigned office or region.
24 Commission level offices were also invited to support the effort, with several

1 offices joining in and appointing culture leaders. Let me pause here for a
2 moment and just focus on one word I mentioned. Accountable. The
3 ultimate goal of the culture leader model is to build accountability across the
4 NRC enterprise, not just discuss, but models the behaviors that will help us
5 get to our ideal culture, just as I discussed on a previous slide. Next slide
6 please.

7 In February of 2024, 25 culture leaders representing almost
8 every office and region at the NRC attended an orientation hosted by the
9 agency culture team. During this orientation, the group was addressed by
10 senior leaders including Chair Hanson and were tasked with being
11 accountable for improving our culture and becoming students of the NRC's
12 culture. The orientation provided an in-depth data dive on the behaviors that
13 define our current culture, our ideal behaviors, and strategies and steps to
14 bring about needed change. Each culture leader was tasked with overseeing
15 the development of a culture improvement action plan to address the specific
16 challenges facing their office or region as identified by data sources such as
17 FEVS and OCI.

18 Each action plan has been completed and submitted to the
19 Agency culture team and are currently undergoing implementation Agency-
20 wide. Next slide, please. As part of the action plan, each culture leader was
21 tasked with building a coalition by recruiting and engaging with change agents
22 in their respective offices. Change agents represent employees at all levels
23 of the agency, and they are critical to identifying areas for improvement.

24 Change agents are committed to modeling our desired

1 behaviors as they collaborate and execute the actions and solutions identified
2 in the plans. These solutions range from improving communication across
3 all levels of the organization, through strengthening a sense of belonging,
4 through the creation of more effective and meaningful employee recognition
5 programs. Some offices and regions have as many as 30 change agents
6 working on these various projects and activities, all designed to increase
7 constructive interactions and behaviors.

8 Together, the Agency culture team, the culture leaders, and
9 the change agents form the NRC culture network as depicted on the graphic
10 in this slide. We recognize and celebrate our culture network as the essential
11 component to our culture improvement efforts. It represents a critical mass
12 of employees who are invested in our culture and our future by volunteering
13 their diverse talents to help make the NRC a better place to work.

14 As part of their roles and responsibilities, each culture leader
15 will be required to report back to the group on their action plans, including
16 implementation status and the specific actions of their change agents.
17 Reporting on actions being taken will demonstrate accountability and will also
18 provide an opportunity for our culture leaders to exchange effective and
19 leading practices which will contribute to an internal community of practice,
20 thus enhancing the Agency's progress. Moving forward in July of 2024, the
21 Agency culture team plans to bring together all the culture leaders for a retreat
22 to continue learning more about our unique OCI and to report out on their
23 current action plan implementation progress. Next slide, please.

24 Next, I would like to acknowledge the NRC's standing in the

1 recently released rankings of best places to work in the federal government.
2 On May 20th, 2024, the Partnership for Public Service released the annual
3 rankings of best places to work in the federal government. For 2023, the
4 NRC dropped from 21 out of 27 to 23 out of 26 for mid-size agencies.

5 Based on FEVS data from last year which we've analyzed,
6 we were not surprised by the drop from 21 to 23. And while I have this
7 opportunity, I want to remind everyone the 2024 FEVS is currently open. You
8 voice matters, and employee input is critical to helping the NRC move forward
9 and restoring our Agency as a top place to work in the federal government.
10 Next slide, please.

11 Even prior to this latest ranking, the Agency has been
12 tracking sustaining a healthy organization as an enterprise risk. We
13 recognize that if we do not foster a healthy culture in which our workforce is
14 diverse, engaged, agile, innovative, risk informed, and inclusive, and adheres
15 to the NRC values, then our effectiveness in meeting our mission could be
16 adversely impacted. However, a lot has happened in the realm of culture in
17 the past year to help improve our rankings in the future.

18 Specifically, our efforts surrounding promoting
19 accountability amongst the Agency's leaders regarding culture and creating a
20 shared understanding about what defines our ideal culture. We've also
21 integrated the conversation about our ideal culture during Agency onboarding
22 activities. This includes NRC Connect and new employee orientation where
23 we provide an overview of our current culture, our ideal culture. And we invite
24 new employees to get involved.

1 Additional culture improvement efforts include
2 benchmarking with our federal counterparts. For example, in March of 2024,
3 one of our culture leaders spearheaded a meeting with leaders from NASA to
4 exchange effective practices. Among our many takeaways from this meeting
5 were insights on how behaviors and culture at NASA have helped shape their
6 operating policies, procedures, practices, and even their organizational
7 structure.

8 We recognize that there is much more to learn. But the
9 energy and focus on culture, we have confidence in our direction. And most
10 recently, we have rolled out a more detailed version of the graphic depicted
11 here on the slide as a visual showing us the connection between our mission
12 and our culture. Next slide, please.

13 As I said at the outset of my portion of this presentation, it
14 all starts with the principles, values, and traits. Our values dictate our
15 behaviors. Our behaviors build our culture. Our culture defines our
16 performance.

17 Each of us needs to demonstrate behaviors consistent with
18 our values every day and in every context. When we see behaviors that are
19 incongruent with our values, there needs to be a pathway to reset and provide
20 feedback, irrespective of level or rank. Our culture needs to nourish an
21 environment centered on trust, to hold ourselves accountable for modeling our
22 values.

23 If we do that as outlined in our ideal culture statement, we
24 will once again rise in the rankings of best places to work in the federal

1 government and continue to be an employer of choice leading to the
2 successful accomplishment of our mission with excellence for years to come.
3 Next slide, please. Thank you, and now I will turn it over to Meredith
4 Neubauer to provide an update on civil rights, diversity, and inclusion.

5 MS. NEUBAUER: Good morning. Thank you, Chris. My
6 name is Meredith Neubauer, and I am a senior civil rights specialist in SBCR.
7 My pronouns are she, her, and hers. And for anyone who may need a visual
8 description, I am a White woman with dark red hair, blue eyes, blue glasses.
9 And today, I'm wearing a black and tan plaid dress.

10 Now you may be wondering why I chose to introduce myself
11 in this fashion. The answer is simple. I want to be inclusive of all the
12 attendees. By sharing my pronouns, I am signaling to other participants that
13 this is a safe space where they can also share their pronouns if they so
14 choose.

15 In addition, people without visual disabilities take in a lot of
16 information about the people and environment around them, the way
17 individuals are dressed, how their hair is styled, and whether those glasses
18 look smart on someone. Providing a visual description offers context and
19 access for all by eliminating an accessibility barrier for those with visual
20 disabilities. In fact, if I was facilitating or giving training, I would also
21 encourage virtual participants to utilize the accessibility features in Teams like
22 live captioning, sign language interpreting, or focus on content so the text is
23 larger on the screen.

24 You may be thinking that this makes for a long introduction.

1 But introductions like this provide a constructive ways to disclose visual and
2 audio information to individuals with disabilities and promote an all-inclusive
3 meeting. Next slide, please. So what is accessibility?

4 A simple definition is the practice of making information,
5 activities, and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many
6 people as possible. With the U.S. Census Bureau reporting that there are an
7 estimated 42.5 million people in the U.S. with a disability, it is important to
8 recognize that removing barriers to accessibility helps new applicants and
9 other skilled workers enter and thrive in the workforce. Next slide, please.

10 This sounds like a great and important practice, but it's not
11 discretionary and it's mandated by law. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 sets
12 forth several provisions which mandates the elimination of accessibility
13 barriers. Section 501 requires federal agencies to recruit individuals with
14 disabilities and ensure that individuals are aware of and have an opportunity
15 to apply for positions.

16 In 2016, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
17 set forth the final rule on Section 501 which established a federal agency
18 should set a goal of 12 percent representation and 2 percent for people with
19 targeted disabilities. This is to be achieved through hiring and voluntary self-
20 disclosure of current employees. The goal is in place so that when we add
21 to our diversity of our physical bodies, we also add to diversity of thought and
22 experiences, enriching the workplace.

23 Reasonable accommodation is also covered under the
24 Rehabilitation Act under Section 501 and is a right of any employee with a

1 disability who needs a modification in performing their essential work
2 functions. Examples of reasonable accommodations includes sign language
3 interpreters, screen writing software for computers, and sit/stand desks
4 amongst many others. Each one of those examples is aimed at removing an
5 accessibility barrier for employees.

6 In addition, Section 508 addresses information technology.
7 Specifically, it requires federal agencies information and communications
8 technology to be accessible to all people regardless of ability or disability.
9 And this applies to all employees and members of the public. Next slide,
10 please.

11 I'd like to turn now to some EEO data on the EEO complaint
12 process and explain how the data is relational to diversity, equity, inclusion,
13 and accessibility. As you look at the slide, you probably first notice that I am
14 using a pattern fill on the columns. This is removing an accessibility barrier.

15 The pattern fill assists individuals with color blindness so
16 that they are able to differentiate between the columns. What you don't see
17 is that I also added alt text to the chart as well. This allows an individual using
18 screen reading software to hear and evaluate the data as a sighted person
19 would visually perceive it.

20 Examining the numbers this fiscal year, so far we have
21 handled 21 contacts. This is people looking for information on the EEO
22 complaint process. Of those 21 contacts, only 10 individuals filed a pre-
23 complaint.

24 You will see on the screen that there are 12 pre-complaints.

1 And this is because individuals have filed more than one. Of those 12 pre-
2 complaints, only 7 chose to file a formal complaint of discrimination. I
3 attribute this low filing rate to our excellent level of personal customer service.
4 When an individual first makes contact, we provide that individual with all of
5 their options, be it the EEO complaint process, negotiated grievance,
6 OCHCO's anti-harassment, or even just speaking directly with their
7 supervisor.

8 Assuming a workforce of 2,889 employees based on our FY
9 '23 numbers, the number of filings represent 0.002 percent of our total
10 workforce. Next slide, please. With only 7 formal complaints filed, we
11 cannot determine any trends of the bases regarding filing at this point. But
12 so far, our bases include race, color, national origin, sex, specifically female,
13 age, disability, and reprisal.

14 It should be noted that complainants and often do allege
15 more than one basis when filing their complaints. Next slide, please. Like
16 with the bases, identifying trends and issues is difficult with such little data.
17 As each case is factually distinct from another, with these smaller numbers, it
18 is difficult to determine any emerging issues.

19 However, our top issues are promotion non-selection, terms
20 and employments of condition, and harassment, both sexual and non-sexual.
21 Next slide, please. Circling back to disability and accessibility, a deeper dive
22 into our complaint numbers is warranted. Looking at the interactions and
23 complaints filed from FY 2020 to FY '24, we can note a few things.

24 First, you will notice that every year we do interact with

1 individuals who allege disability as a basis for the alleged discrimination.
2 These numbers include EEO contacts, pre-complaints, and formal complaints.
3 We see fairly low numbers with the exception of FY '22 which corresponds
4 with the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccine requirements, and reentry into the
5 building.

6 FY '22 is a perfect example of how external and
7 environmental factors can influence EEO complaint activity. Next slide,
8 please. If we look further into the complaints where disability is a basis and
9 reasonable accommodation as an issue alleged, we also see the spike in FY
10 '22. But the main takeaway from this slide is that complaints where disability
11 is alleged does not always encompass reasonable accommodation.

12 Other issues like assignment of duties or promotion non-
13 selection or other employment issues may come into play. So while it is vital
14 that we maintain a robust reasonable accommodation program, we also need
15 to recognize that other issues may affect individuals with disabilities in the
16 workplace. Next slide, please. As we examine the numbers and given the
17 increased hiring of new employees, how is the Agency making accessibility a
18 priority?

19 First, I would like to give credit to the NRC Advisory
20 Committee for Employees with Disabilities, ACED. Last October, they held a
21 panel discussion for National Disability Employment Month in which members
22 from SBCR, OGC, and OCHCO participated. At the start of the panel
23 discussion, one of the panelists disclosed that they are diagnosed with major
24 depressive and obsessive compulsive disorders.

1 And while I'm not here to suggest that people publicly
2 disclose their disabilities unless they want to, it was a very powerful statement
3 given to remove the stigma surrounding mental disabilities. And it's further
4 explained by the panelist given to show the importance of self-disclosure as it
5 relates to the Rehabilitation Act. ACED is also leading the way through their
6 goals of promoting the self-identification of disabilities and staff personnel
7 records, sharing best practices for interacting with persons with disabilities in
8 the workplace and identifying opportunities to address accessibility issues and
9 NRC's policies and practices, amongst others.

10 I also want to recognize the efforts of the Acquisition
11 Management Division in ADM who ensures that all NRC contracts include
12 provisions related to Section 508 compliance. At the suggestion of the core
13 working group of which I am a member, AMD will also be hosting a masters
14 of acquisition training on 508 compliance later this year. This training aims
15 to teach contracting officers representatives not only what is 508 compliance
16 but why it is contained in our contracts and how to ensure contractors are
17 meeting those provisions.

18 And finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the
19 inclusive language ambassadors in our grassroots efforts as well. While we
20 do not specifically speak on accessibility, we teach people how to make
21 inclusive introductions and promote language as a powerful tool for
22 discussions around ability and disability. As you may have noticed, I have
23 always referenced a person with a disability as opposed to saying a disabled
24 person.

1 One of the tenets of inclusive language it to be person
2 focused first. And I like to think that we have helped shape many
3 conversations and work products here at the NRC. Next slide, please. So
4 what does the future hold?

5 There is still much more work to be done. SBCR along with
6 its partners are creating an agency policy statement on Section 508
7 compliance. Additional training and awareness, especially around employee
8 responsibilities on how to create accessible documents needs to be held and
9 adopted as part of our Agency culture.

10 As we increase awareness and diversify our workforce,
11 potential new accessibility barriers will be identified. And we must work
12 together to eliminate them. Thank you. Next slide, please.

13 MR. MORRIS: Thank you, Meredith.

14 I'd like to conclude today's remarks by expressing my
15 gratitude to the staff and management in OCHCO, SBCR, the Agency culture
16 team, our culture leaders and change agents, and indeed, staff from all around
17 the Agency. You continue to focus on mission achievement and improving
18 our organizational health.

19 As I said earlier, I'm absolutely confident that the initiatives
20 we are implementing now, along with the continued enterprise-wide focus at
21 the senior leadership level, over time, will significantly advance us towards
22 realizing our ideal culture and workplace and maximize our overall
23 effectiveness and efficiency in achieving our mission.

24 Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today and

1 we look forward to your questions.

2 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Scott.

3 Thanks to all the staff for their presentations this morning.

4 We'll begin questions with Commissioner Wright.

5 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you, Chair.

6 Good morning, everyone. Thank you for your
7 presentations and I know it took a lot of time to prepare for that.

8 And so, thank your staffs as well that supported you.

9 Before I get started, Kelly, I understand this is your first
10 Commission meeting.

11 MS. BARRIE: It was.

12 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Welcome.

13 And to celebrate with you, I'm not going to ask you any
14 questions.

15 (Laughter)

16 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: It's Chris's, too? All right,
17 very good.

18 But you stood up before, I've seen you at some of the other
19 things.

20 So, but do feel free to jump in if you feel you can add value
21 and in support of your colleagues here on the panel.

22 So, welcome.

23 Before I get into the questions a little bit, Scott and Craig,
24 y'all both used something, and I just want to ask about a definition of

1 something.

2 You spoke about the organizational health strategy 2.3.1,
3 right?

4 And you -- the things that the panel's here today trying to
5 support and talk about this, that feed into that, right?

6 But you -- what is the definition for employer of choice?
7 What does that mean?

8 MR. CRAIGHEAD: Thank you for the question,
9 Commissioner.

10 So, employer of choice, in my view, would be a highly
11 desired place to work where you have a high applicant pool, a lot of interest,
12 a top place to work.

13 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Okay.

14 Only just a suggestion, if we're going to use a term like that,
15 maybe we should define it somewhere. Because I looked around, I couldn't
16 find what it meant so that's why I was asking the question.

17 But I understand kind of the principle and I was thinking
18 maybe that's where you were going with it, but it'd be nice to maybe define
19 that a little bit better.

20 The -- and also, I forget which one, I think Matthew, it was
21 you.

22 You talked about a little bit of luck that you had. Right?

23 Quite honestly, after hearing you talk, I can tell you, I've
24 heard the phrase before. There is no such thing as luck, you know, but

1 success happens when preparation meets opportunity.

2 And it sounds like you've been very prepared in what you
3 were doing in order to have the success that you've had at the TTC.

4 So, congratulations on that.

5 But, yes, it's the preparation that leads to that success.

6 So, yes.

7 And we're going to be in touch with you about some other
8 opportunities that I've talked with some of the states about that maybe you
9 can plug into a little bit.

10 So, at least advise us on, so thank you for that.

11 (Off mic comments)

12 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes.

13 Eric, welcome.

14 You know, OCHCO has faced a number of challenges in
15 recent years that have impacted morale. Right? And it's been pretty
16 obvious.

17 There's been considerable turnover and increase in
18 workload given the hiring efforts that we've had, impacts on the budget due to
19 NEIMA and other requirements, and also, changes in senior leadership, right,
20 which we're still going through.

21 And I've got a couple of questions. I'm going to give you a
22 couple of simple ones real quick here.

23 What is OCHCO doing to address those issues and these
24 changes?

1 And how are we making sure that we're getting the right
2 people and not just warm bodies?

3 You addressed a little bit of it, but can you give a little more
4 detail to that?

5 MR. DILWORTH: Yes, thank you, sir.

6 I'll talk about OCHCO first, morale, and those type of things.

7 You know, creating a culture of respect is first where all the
8 employees feel respected. And when I talk about that, that means respecting
9 their professional work, respecting the ideas, and professional advice that they
10 provide to me and other senior leaders, and giving them the opportunity to do
11 that and know that they're going to be supported in their efforts and we're all
12 working together to be successful, be highly successful.

13 Other way you do that is empower people. Empower them
14 to make the appropriate decisions at the right level.

15 And that's giving them confidence, giving them the training
16 to do their jobs, giving them leadership support, and then, peer support.

17 Those things will increase and enhance the culture within
18 OCHCO.

19 And we have a good strong culture of teamwork, support,
20 that goes across the agency. It makes us do a better job for the -- allows us
21 to do a better job for the agency.

22 And also, it goes into, you know, moving us up in the best
23 places to work.

24 We have a strong OCHCO team that's providing great

1 service to the workforce.

2 So, that's where we're building and already seeing that
3 happen.

4 The second part of your question, you -- if you'd read that to
5 me again, sir --

6 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes, so --

7 MR. DILWORTH: -- I just want to make sure I touch on it.

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: -- what do we -- how are we
9 making sure that we're getting the right people and not just warm bodies?

10 MR. DILWORTH: And I'll tell you, our supervisors are
11 really good at interviewing, ask the right questions.

12 But one of the things we're going to support them with is do
13 more training. And Kelly talked about that, more supervisory training, so they
14 fully understand the process so when they're working with applicants, you
15 know, they can help the applicant understand the process, how that's going to
16 work out.

17 But we have a strong --

18 And then, giving them the best candidates, going through
19 our lists, making sure that we're giving them qualified people to hire from.

20 And that goes to training my staff. You know, we have a lot
21 of new people with experience, but maybe need some enhancements and
22 some training here and there.

23 So, doing that is going to ensure that we recruit the right
24 people and go to the right places.

1 We talk about recruiting, and we do go out to a lot of different
2 campuses, different professional organizations, conferences.

3 But we need to do more of assessing, you know, are we
4 going to the right places?

5 Are we receiving resumes?

6 Are we hiring from those?

7 Maybe we're going to a place where there's a lot of folks,
8 but we're just not competitive. So, we've got to do a better job at that.

9 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So, you've opened up a
10 number of areas I would love to ask questions on. I will not have time,
11 probably, but I'm going to throw out a couple of things at you.

12 So, opportunities to -- I have noticed you expanded a little
13 bit. You're doing a little bit more public stuff.

14 But one opportunity that was clearly missed was the RIC
15 where, you know, we had a paid for auditorium that you could have easily put
16 a table up at.

17 Others had tables there that they were hiring people.

18 MR. DILWORTH: Yes, sir.

19 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: You know, potentially, NRC
20 people away from here.

21 We should have had a table as well.

22 So, I would take those opportunities that are like -- those are
23 -- that's a gift horse right there, take those opportunities. Clearly something
24 that's open to you to do.

1 You know, you mentioned that -- and we've been told that
2 hiring had gone from 140 days down to about a 120.

3 Now, you just said, I think it was 130 days. Right?

4 OPM target is 80.

5 You said that our -- the average of government is a 100.
6 Right?

7 MR. DILWORTH: Yes, sir.

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Have you engaged our -- any
9 sister agencies of ours that have the same issues we may have, right,
10 background checks, stuff like that, and see what they may be doing and how
11 they may be doing their stuff?

12 Because I know FERC is like 80 days.

13 MR. DILWORTH: Right.

14 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: You know?

15 MR. DILWORTH: They are.

16 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: And you know, the things that
17 they're doing that we're not or that we could maybe, you know, copy.

18 MR. DILWORTH: In fact, before I -- about a month ago, I
19 had been talking about we need to do a process improvement event within
20 NRC for a while in our staffing and recruitment area.

21 So, as I was talking to several leaders about that, talking
22 about our entire staff, I did reach out to the FERC CHCO. We had a great
23 conversation, Eddie, a couple weeks ago.

24 And one of the things they did, you know, he's been in that

1 seat for 14 years. But they were just -- they set goals for one thing.

2 We really just started measuring our time to hire really
3 getting our data. And I still -- I'm still not all there on our data and that's going
4 to be part of our time to hire event.

5 But one of the things they did continuous process
6 improvement, not just a one-time shot.

7 Because they, in fact, they changed their goal. Their goal
8 was 55 days, but now, they've moved it up to 75 because they saw that they
9 needed to add some nuances in their process that it was going to take longer.

10 But still, 75 days, and they're meeting that goal.

11 But it takes process improvement, system management,
12 doing the most with the system you're using. And they use the same
13 operating system we use in the staffing process.

14 So, he's willing to work -- have his folks work with my staff
15 as we go through our process improvement event.

16 But that's really where we're going to gain those efficiencies.
17 We have to -- I can tell you, I can look and kind of tell you where we have
18 many areas to improve, but we -- and we will.

19 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So, thank you for that.

20 And I know -- you are -- we've had conversations on that
21 and I am definitely convinced you're going to go that route and you're going to
22 do that.

23 I wanted to ask one quick -- one other question before I turn
24 it over to my fellow Commissioners.

1 And I think it's more about messaging than anything else.

2 But we've been told that we'd hired, you know, nearly 300
3 people last year and we were heading toward 300 this year.

4 But in reality, we're not hiring new people like that. We're -
5 - the majority of hires of the -- that we've had have been internal. And it's
6 mainly been the kind of reshuffling deck chairs from regions to headquarters
7 or headquarters to regions and whatever, right, fill in those jobs.

8 I'm all for opportunity in our people filling those slots. I'm
9 for that.

10 But if we're -- but if we've only really on boarded 100, maybe
11 200 people max, maybe, is that --

12 MR. DILWORTH: No, we did around 280 last year, new
13 people. And we're on target to do around that many this year, 250 and above.

14 But the issue is we do another 350 internal actions.

15 So --

16 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Okay.

17 MR. DILWORTH: -- you know, the balance the workload
18 for managers and for OCHCO, that's where we know we struggle.

19 So, one of the things with that is that we -- and Kelly's
20 branch, they have been maybe 50 percent manned or staffed -- 50 percent
21 staffed most of the year.

22 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

23 MR. DILWORTH: Now, we're finally staffing up to a full
24 level.

1 That will allow us to meet the internal effort to move -- make
2 -- doing all those actions --

3 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

4 MR. DILWORTH: -- and doing the external actions.

5 Also, with our, you know, with all the hiring we have done,
6 fortunately, we're getting our -- getting up to our FTE level.

7 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

8 MR. DILWORTH: So, our hiring effort will decrease,
9 external hiring effort will decrease somewhat in 2025, where we can meet it.

10 But hopefully, we're going to be more efficient and get even
11 better at it.

12 That's how we'll meet that internal and external balance.

13 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

14 And because we've heard about the workload.

15 MR. DILWORTH: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: We hear a lot about that.
17 Right?

18 And if -- my concern was, if all we're doing is moving bodies
19 around, we're not bringing in the, you know, the calvary to help out, to train
20 and do what we need to have done.

21 So, thank you for --

22 MR. DILWORTH: And we can't stop the internal actions
23 because it is promotion opportunities and reassignment and career
24 development opportunities. So, we don't want to slow that down, either.

1 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you very much.

2 MR. MORRIS: And I think just last year was the first time
3 in several years where we've actually on boarded -- we had a net gain from
4 on boarding new to attrition. And that continues to rise.

5 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Very good, thank you.

6 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Wright.

7 Commissioner Caputo?

8 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, for those who might be
9 watching us on webcasts, just want to let you know, we've got a couple rouge
10 flies buzzing around the table. So, if you see people swiping at their ears and
11 whatnot, we've got interlopers that we're dealing with.

12 I want to acknowledge all the participants, you know, in their
13 preparations for today. You've clearly covered a lot of ground. There's a lot
14 of substance here.

15 Like Commissioner Wright said, I'm going to have more
16 questions than we have time for today.

17 But these meetings are so essential to understanding the
18 current state of play in terms of human capital, EEO efforts, with an eye toward
19 making progress.

20 So, it's critical in addition to hiring that the Agency ensures
21 that it retains highly skilled and capable workforce for today's needs and those
22 in the future.

23 So, I just -- I want to make a special thank you to Eric for
24 serving as Acting Chief Human Capital Officer for OCHCO and your

1 leadership in this crucial role.

2 And to his team for all of their hard work and that team
3 certainly extends beyond this table.

4 But it's been a big challenge for a long time and a sustained
5 effort. And that sustained effort is going to continue into the future.

6 So, I want to recognize that hard work.

7 I want to call out, too, the two observations just from the
8 presentations this morning about our use of data.

9 Kelly, I really appreciated that.

10 Matthew, I really appreciated your focus on cross training,
11 cross qualification. I think that's going to be really important as we go
12 forward, so thank you for those.

13 But in keeping with the more questions than I have time for,
14 I'm going to keep things at a pretty high level.

15 So, workforce surveys are an important tool for leaders to
16 gain feedback from employees and to focus on continued improvement.

17 But they are not a substitute for leadership direction.

18 So, as Scott mentioned, we've dropped from 21 to 23. I'm
19 concerned that the decline is related to leadership and communication.

20 Scores are likely suffering, in part, due to a lack of clear
21 goals and objections.

22 Without clear goals and objectives, it's difficult for staff to
23 see how their day-to-day efforts align and support higher level mission
24 objectives.

1 So, this can erode engagement and job satisfaction.

2 So, I would like to see the Agency return in the scores to be
3 one of the best places to work in the federal government.

4 And we clearly continue to have brilliant and capable staff
5 that will strive to meet and exceed the goals that are set.

6 And achieving those goals, and celebrating those
7 successes are an essential element to job satisfaction, staff engagement, and
8 pride in the Agency.

9 So, Scott, you referred to a need for leadership, trust, but
10 it's not clear from the discussion that senior leadership team understands
11 what's driving these numbers.

12 So, can you tell me, I understand you've set up a culture
13 leaders network, but can you describe for me what actions senior leadership
14 is prepared to take to ensure the Agency heads in the right direction?

15 We can't survey people into job satisfaction.

16 MR. MORRIS: Yes, thanks for the question.

17 It's really important and we -- well, first of all, let me start
18 with, we own this. Right? Myself, Ray, the senior leaders in this room and
19 watching online throughout the Agency.

20 We've had these conversations and we continue to have
21 these conversations about the why.

22 What's going on that's driving the trend?

23 And it starts with us. We know that. Right?

24 And so, we, at our level, have to demonstrate these

1 behaviors and hold each other accountable at our level first.

2 But we can't expect anyone in the staff to follow that if we're
3 not doing it ourselves. We have to walk the talk.

4 So, that's number one.

5 And we can talk about how a little bit, if you'd like.

6 But the other thing is, is also, and Chris mentioned, we
7 defined the culture we're striving for so we can all speak with a common
8 language about what it is -- what is the goal we're trying to achieve?

9 Clearly and articulately state, this is it. This is what we're
10 trying to do so that we can hold the mirror up to ourselves and each other and
11 say, you're not doing that.

12 You know, we're -- you're not -- but in a respectful way.
13 Right? And not in a combative way.

14 So, doing that.

15 It's also sharing with the staff in more frequent interactions,
16 whether that be through a more interactive town halls that we've done at the
17 EDO level. We've changed the format of that to try to create more dialogue
18 and engagement with senior leaders.

19 We just had a senior leadership meeting where, historically,
20 we've talked about, you know, enterprise-wide risks or other changes and
21 things that are going on.

22 We're shifting that, we're shifting away from that to focus
23 those meetings on team building at our level, to focus on our own culture at
24 our level.

1 You know, Chris -- we mentioned the culture leader thing
2 and we had a really great orientation.

3 We've got another culture retreat coming up this summer,
4 active engagement, not just from myself, but also our executive champions,
5 Von Ordaz, Dave Pelton, and Julio -- so, it's a lot of things.

6 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I'm sorry, Scott, I need to ask
7 a clarifying question.

8 MR. MORRIS: Go ahead.

9 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, you said the leadership
10 had a meeting -- I'm aware of strategic alignment meeting that focused on
11 organizational health and stakeholder confidence.

12 You're saying that there was a senior management meeting
13 on enterprise risk management?

14 MR. MORRIS: No, what I'm saying is, is that we're
15 retooling a lot of our meetings, including what we have -- we have a senior
16 leadership meeting generally every three to four months hosted by the EDO.
17 All the senior leaders from around the Agency attend. It's usually a two-day
18 agenda.

19 And we have, historically, focused on topical things, you
20 know, the issues that we're working on technically or programmatically and
21 less about teamwork and culture development and team building.

22 That's the shift I'm talking about there, to deal with all the --
23 to address all the other things we're challenged with, the programmatic and
24 technical things, and enterprise wide, risk management, we're sharpening our

1 focus at our quarterly performance reviews.

2 We're taking advantage of our biweekly leadership touch
3 point meetings, which is, again, the same audience of senior leaders meeting
4 every two weeks to talk and keep the focus on the enterprise-wide risk
5 management activities.

6 Staffing is one of those --

7 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay.

8 So, you are --

9 MR. MORRIS: -- it's just one of them.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Because that's kind of my
11 question. Right?

12 I mean, strategic alignment meeting on organizational
13 health and stakeholder engagement.

14 But there's clearly a need, given where we are in terms of
15 the challenges with executing efficient licensing reviews.

16 There's a need to balance --

17 MR. MORRIS: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: -- improvement and how we
19 execute our mission.

20 MR. MORRIS: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: And to balance those efforts
22 with the efforts on organizational health.

23 Do you believe senior management has an appropriate
24 balance?

1 MR. MORRIS: I think we are -- we tend to be, and this is
2 my opinion, I think we tend to focus on mission, which is important and getting
3 the job done, and less on how we interact with each other to get the job done.

4 So, I believe we need to do a better job which is why we're
5 shifting the focus to some of these meeting opportunities and having, you
6 know, providing this type of feedback.

7 We talk about it in our succession planning meeting that we
8 just had about as we provide feedback to each of our executives about --

9 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, I'd to ask a slightly
10 different question.

11 At the last Commission meeting I asked a question related
12 to shedding low priority work to enable staff to focus on priority work and on
13 training and workforce development needs.

14 The EDO, at the time, mentioned efforts at managing the
15 work, prioritizing, and making sure that we are consciously identifying lower
16 priority work as an outcome to the June 2023 Agency Jam sessions.

17 So, we are a year past the Jam, and I'm not clear what
18 actions the Agency has taken to look at shedding or deferring lower priority
19 work to manage the work burden on employees.

20 MR. MORRIS: Yes, thanks for that.

21 That's a -- so, you're correct, there was -- this was one of
22 the two key outcomes from the jam last year was knowledge management
23 and workload.

24 And we had Rob Lewis and others led an effort and continue

1 to lead an effort. In fact, they just briefed the -- they provided an out brief at
2 the last EDO town hall on all the work that they had done and are doing to
3 support the branch chief, primarily, first line supervisors, and managing their
4 workload, and identifying low-value work, and shedding that, and how to
5 communicate that and build alignment vertically through the organization
6 about what we're not going to do.

7 So, I'm not -- I can't, off the top of my head, rattle off all the
8 things that he and his team have done --

9 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Right.

10 Well, I'd like to get --

11 MR. MORRIS: -- but they are --

12 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: -- a briefing on that.

13 MR. MORRIS: Yes, absolutely.

14 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: And Eric, it was great to see
15 the sustained hiring effort.

16 You know, we've heard, and Commissioner Wright
17 mentioned, 600 new employees.

18 You mentioned 350 reassignments.

19 That means knowledge management and training is going
20 on with approximately 950 employees, which is, you know, a third of the
21 workforce.

22 So, that's a big challenge.

23 Thank you, Matt, for working on that, because I continue to
24 be concerned that we are making sure we are preparing mid-career staff for

1 increasing responsibilities and leadership. So, thank you for that.

2 The last thing I'd like to say is, just to acknowledge a
3 tremendous effort that recently went into an event related to women's issues
4 in the work environment.

5 The communication workshop was entitled Stronger
6 Together, Advocating for Yourself and Others. It took place on April 30th.

7 It would not have been possible without the support of the
8 Office of Small Business and Civil Rights, thank you, Meredith, Federal
9 Women's Program Advisory Committee, the Technical Women's Network,
10 regional participation, and Agency employees who volunteered to serve in a
11 variety of roles.

12 I believe we need to continue fostering an inclusive work
13 environment that values and empowers all employees to fully contribute to our
14 mission and to reach their full potential.

15 These issues are deeply personal to me and I'm thrilled that
16 so many people participated.

17 For anyone who participated, you could tell there was a high
18 level of energy in the room and discussions, lively discussions.

19 So, I am hopeful that this conversation was very helpful and
20 beneficial to those who participated.

21 I am really thankful for everyone who supported the event.

22 In going forward, I look forward to continue to participate in
23 organizing sessions like this, including future events, charting career
24 pathways, among some other ideas.

1 So, thanks to everyone. I look forward to really building
2 some momentum here and creating some tangible progress going forward.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Caputo.

5 Commissioner Crowell?

6 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7 Thank you all for your presentations today. I appreciate it.

8 This is not the first time that Commissioner Caputo has
9 stolen a joke of mine that I wanted to give, too.

10 But I was going to say, Meredith can be -- is going to file a
11 harassment complaint against the fly that has been harassing all of us at this
12 table today. It's been quite a distraction.

13 Matt, kudos to you for ignoring it so well. I don't even know
14 if you knew it was crawling all over you, but I couldn't ignore it.

15 (Off mic comments)

16 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So, and you know, I'm
17 going to do a little bit more talking than asking questions, which is not my
18 normal MO, but it's just the nature of the topic today.

19 And you know, Scott, I want to start by saying, you know, I
20 appreciate you saying that, you know, we own this.

21 However, I would say, it's not just that, it's that we own it,
22 too. This is -- we're all in this together. And so, the solution is going to be
23 determined together as well.

24 So, I appreciate the sense of responsibility, but it extends to

1 all of us on both sides of the table.

2 And I, you know, I think that leads directly into some of the
3 FEVS scores stuff that we've been talking about today.

4 And again, data can't -- isn't -- doesn't always paint the best
5 or most accurate picture. But it is a viewpoint into our daily work lives.

6 But when you look at the FEVS scores, and you know, it
7 stands out pretty clearly that, you know, the low bar here or the low scores are
8 effective leadership at -- for senior leaders.

9 Well, that's most of us sitting at this table.

10 And if you look at effective leadership supervisors, those are
11 really high scores.

12 And so, what happens from when you go from being a
13 supervisor to a senior leader that you are no longer getting high scores and
14 effective leadership?

15 Something's going on.

16 And so, you know, that tells me that, you know, we need to
17 look at our SES and SL and those ranks and above and find out what's going
18 on.

19 My gut, just from my experience over time in government
20 organizations where I spent most of my career at the state and federal level,
21 it usually comes down to communication.

22 And I think, you know, an organization that has good, robust
23 communication usually has a good culture because people feel like they're
24 included and they know what's going on. And for better or for worse, they

1 know what's going on and they don't feel like they're on the outside looking in.

2 And I would say that I think that our post-COVID world is
3 influencing that somewhat because life has changed and communications
4 patterns have changed. And we're still learning and adapting to how to
5 communicate most effectively.

6 I'm not giving that as an excuse, it's just a challenge for all
7 of us to figure that out.

8 Fortunately, I think it can be figured out. We just need to
9 make sure it is a priority as we do so.

10 You know, and I'm encouraged by the new hire news that
11 says that we're starting to turn the corner and we're doing something right.

12 I'm going to -- the questions I do have today are probably
13 things that you don't have ready answers for, but I'd be interested in hearing
14 as follow up.

15 But on those new hires, I'd be interested to know how many
16 are coming from other public sector government agencies versus the private
17 sector?

18 So we have a sense of how well we're doing recruiting
19 against, you know, particularly the private sector where we can't compete
20 necessarily in the same way for those employees.

21 And you know, I don't know if we've done this, and I'll also
22 step back here for a second, and Eric, this one's going to come to you, I know
23 a lot of you are pitch-hitting in roles are new or pitch-hitting in roles you haven't
24 done before. And so, I appreciate you doing what you do and being here

1 today and fielding some questions that are oftentimes challenging.

2 Do we have a process for soliciting input from new hires
3 about the recruitment hiring and on boarding process so we can get better at
4 that?

5 MR. DILWORTH: We do. What we -- and we really just
6 started last year. We do it through our reconnect program.

7 It's -- we're educating them, but we also receive feedback
8 because it's a six-series program where we teach about the culture and about
9 the values of NRC.

10 And then, about some basic benefits and federal benefits,
11 that type of thing.

12 So, we receive feedback in that.

13 And also, in our on boarding, because that's the process
14 where we really, you know, how long it took them to get their job offers, all of
15 this stuff. So, we're going about receiving feedback from that.

16 I don't think we have it quite formalized yet, but that's where
17 we really need to get it, when they first finish the on boarding process.

18 So, we have work to do there, too.

19 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I think this goes without
20 saying, but the best hiring and recruitment tool is everyone in this room and
21 every employee at the Agency.

22 I mean, the best way to recruit is to hear from some other
23 employee at the Agency.

24 And if, you know, if I'm not telling a good story about my on

1 boarding to the NRC to my friend who is qualified to work here, it's, you know,
2 it's not going to -- certainly not going to respond to a vacancy announcement
3 that's just random.

4 So, we all have to be ambassadors and have to tell that
5 good story.

6 I'm also interested in knowing, and I don't think you'll have
7 this at your fingertips today, but, you know, how many engineers and scientists
8 we have performing non-engineering and science roles?

9 Because I think that's another point here at the NRC that
10 I've noticed over my time is that we do a lot of internal moving people around
11 but putting them in positions that they're skill set is not suited for. It's not -- it
12 doesn't mean they can't do it, it doesn't mean people can't, if they want to,
13 switch career paths and learn all this stuff.

14 But we seem to do too much of it where we just assume that,
15 if you're, you know, have this one technical specialty, you'll be great at human
16 capital as well.

17 And there will be cases where that's true, but for the most
18 part, it doesn't always work very well.

19 So, we need to be cognizant of how we're matching skill sets
20 up with job responsibilities.

21 Meredith, I'm going to turn to you here for a second.

22 One, I really appreciate your presentation.

23 I -- no, I don't take too much offense at it, but, you know, my
24 friends and colleagues gave me a hard time because I need to have a big font

1 and I can't see the difference between colors these days, you know, but it does
2 make a difference and it adds up.

3 And these are small things that don't get talked about but
4 make a big difference for people in their daily lives.

5 So, I appreciate you pointing those things out.

6 But with regard to the, you know, you referenced the low
7 number of complaints filed, and that doesn't give enough data to really data
8 trend.

9 Yes, that's true, but is there another way to look at that?
10 Whereas, the low number of complaints and, therefore, data, that's a silver
11 lining? That's a good sign that there's not a lot?

12 If you had a lot of data, you've got a bigger problem going
13 on.

14 MS. NEUBAUER: I think so.

15 And I think, most importantly, showing that, yes, we've done
16 21 contacts. But then, we're giving people various options. Right?

17 So, it's not necessarily resulting in an EEO complaint.

18 And then, from there, we're resolving them at the informal
19 level so that we have a small number of formal complaints going forward.

20 I think that is absolutely a great testament of what we are
21 doing and how we are making things work.

22 As to the number itself of having low level number of
23 contacts, yes, it absolutely could be seen as a good thing. But I think it also
24 -- we need to explore are people afraid to enter the EEO process?

1 How is the environment reflecting on what peoples'
2 mentality is about the complaints or about what their work environment is?

3 So, I don't think that's necessarily to speculate as a good
4 thing in and of itself.

5 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes, I agree.

6 And it is -- I often find it's much more challenging for folks to
7 bring a complaint or a concern forward if it's about -- if it's not about the
8 substance of the job, but it's something more reflective of them or how they
9 feel and their colleagues are much more reluctant to bring that forward.

10 So, I think the low data reflects that, too. So, we need to
11 make that safe environment a priority.

12 Chris, quick question for you.

13 You mentioned ISOCER, the organizational values.

14 And I was looking through the briefing book but I can't find
15 what the organizational values are.

16 What are the organizational values that ISOCER
17 represents?

18 MR. CRAIGHEAD: You're putting me on the spot to quote
19 the acronym here. I might need some help.

20 (Laughter)

21 MR. CRAIGHEAD: But the integrity, service, openness,
22 commitment --

23 MR. MORRIS: Collaboration, excellence, and respect.

24 MR. CRAIGHEAD: Yes, thank you.

1 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay, okay, got you.

2 Yes, thank you.

3 And I will leave it there for now, but I think -- I appreciate all
4 that you --

5 No, I'll make one other comment.

6 There's a slide in the background material here where it
7 shows that there is some small amount of employees at the Agency that are
8 over 80 years old, and I want to say, thank you, congratulations for going that
9 -- I mean, that is like really putting your life aside for the benefit of an agency.
10 So, whoever you are, thank you.

11 And with that, I will turn it to the Chair.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Commissioner Crowell.

14 Okay, well, here I am batting clean up. So, but I am going
15 to take a note from Commissioner Crowell here and just talk for a few minutes.

16 Thank you all for your presentations this morning. I think it
17 was a really insightful discussion and thank you all for your service.

18 I wanted to, speaking of the background material, I mean,
19 one of the things I noticed was several pages on kind of a proposed list of
20 recruiting events that we have in front of us.

21 And it wasn't just universities, although there are a lot of
22 universities on here, it was also things like the Society of Black Engineers.

23 There was recruiting at career fairs at say the naval
24 shipyards and other kinds of things.

1 And it's a really comprehensive list and I don't know, you
2 know, obviously, there wasn't a commitment to do all of these, but if we even
3 do some of these with, you know, reaching out to Veterans and the HBCUs
4 and the Hispanic serving institutions on this list, I think we're poised to get a
5 really robust group of people.

6 And I want to celebrate the broad kind of thinking that went
7 into this, because I think it's exactly where we need to go. So, thank you.

8 I wanted to really echo Commissioner Caputo's remarks
9 about the special emphasis programs and the EEO Advisory Committees. I
10 think they play a really, really important role in the Agency in building a diverse
11 and inclusive workforce.

12 And all the events she mentioned, the storytelling event
13 which I heard great things about.

14 And of course, the Technical Women's Network did their
15 action plan and these kinds of things.

16 So, I encourage everybody to get involved with that as I
17 know we all are.

18 I'll make a small PSA for Pride Month. June is Pride Month.
19 It's a time to celebrate and reflect. And I think it's these kinds of events, you
20 know, getting back into the EEO Advisory Committees, et cetera, are a great
21 time to get out there and enjoy, you know, join your fellow colleagues.

22 There's a short ceremony to raise the Pride flag out front of
23 One White Flint tomorrow morning at 9:00.

24 And then, there will be a keynote in the Two White Flint

1 auditorium I think at noon called Behind the Performance Culture on Self-
2 Expression with Drag.

3 And so, I hope to see you all there. I'll be there.

4 So, I do actually have a question, believe it or not.

5 But let me make kind of an observation, particularly Scott
6 and Chris.

7 I agree with -- and this picks up on something I think that
8 Commissioner Crowell mentioned and Commissioner Caputo -- about the
9 communication in the organization.

10 And Scott, you know, you talked about the senior leaders
11 kind of talking better amongst themselves.

12 But if -- and I agree with Commissioner Caputo about the
13 importance of setting expectations.

14 But that's a vertical problem.

15 This expectation setting and the communication is a vertical
16 problem, not necessarily a horizontal one.

17 And I know in the culture change stuff, Chris, that you're
18 talking about, it's really a matter of both. Right?

19 But one of the key words that you called out in your
20 presentation was about accountability.

21 And accountability seems, yes, you know, Scott, to your
22 point, amongst senior leaders, we can look at each other and hold up our
23 behaviors and say, does this look like what we're aspiring to? And say, yes
24 or no.

1 But it's also about, hey, how are leaders in the Agency
2 building that culture of trust so that then, they can also have that culture of
3 accountability?

4 And I don't know one of both of you kind of want to respond
5 to this.

6 MR. MORRIS: Yes, I --

7 CHAIR HANSON: But I think it's really important and I think
8 it's kind of -- I'm concerned that it's kind of getting lost in part of the
9 conversation.

10 MR. MORRIS: Yes.

11 No, it's -- I just didn't have enough time to get there.

12 (Laughter)

13 MR. MORRIS: So, we've done a number of things and are
14 continuing to do some things.

15 We just instituted, for example, what we call the COM 7
16 process. It's the name of a procedure. There is no calm one through six, it's
17 Calm Seven because, in effective communications theory, I guess, you know,
18 there's this notion that you have to say something seven times in seven
19 different ways before people really embrace it and understand it.

20 So, we actually call it the COM 7 process. And it is to
21 ensure that, A, there's leadership and the messaging that we're trying to
22 convey to the staff, you know, congruity, you know, we're agreeing at the
23 senior, and writing it down so that -- and publishing those things so people can
24 see and hold us accountable to actually doing what we say.

1 So, that's one piece.

2 I mentioned the EDO town halls where we're trying to be
3 more active, more interactive and engaging and calling up people, you know,
4 senior leaders from the audience to respond to different issues that get raised.

5 We're evolving our -- we have a biweekly leadership touch
6 point meeting every Wednesday.

7 And you know, one of the things we do in those
8 conversations, as well as others, is to make sure that whatever decisions that
9 we're making, that we're communicating those decisions in a consistent --
10 clear and consistent manner.

11 We've got a long way to go. We recognize there's -- I agree
12 with Commissioner Crowell, that, you know, I think communication is a large
13 part of the challenge that we're working on.

14 But these are some of the things that we're trying to do to,
15 not only just reflect and talk about the feedback, but actually do something
16 about it.

17 CHAIR HANSON: Chris, you can add whatever you'd like.

18 MR. CRAIGHEAD: I'll add to that, so, thank you, it's a great
19 question.

20 I think communication comes up all the time. It's one of our
21 major challenges.

22 And so, I have here the culture improvement plans that
23 every culture leader has submitted to the culture team.

24 And as I've been looking over for the last two weeks,

1 communication comes up in every single plan.

2 And so, as an organization, our culture leaders are looking
3 at how are we communicating within our office or our region and how can we
4 build trust with that communication?

5 So, every office and region is focused on that. And so, we
6 hope that and believe that we'll see some improvements in terms of
7 communication lineally and vertically as well.

8 CHAIR HANSON: Yes, I think it's not just necessarily -- this
9 is also an issue of kind of quality as much as it is quantity. Right?

10 It's not just more communication, it's actually, we are all
11 saying the same things because we share the same the same values and we
12 have the same expectations and we have the same goals. Right.

13 So, consistency kind of up and down the organization.

14 MR. MORRIS: Could I just add one thing?

15 So, the FEVS surveys only come out once a year. So, it's
16 sort of a lagging indicator.

17 What -- the other conversation we're having at the senior
18 leadership level is to institute more frequent pulse surveys, short, very short,
19 pithier, but on a more frequent basis so we can get more real-time feedback
20 about how we're doing. How effectively we're communicating.

21 CHAIR HANSON: I get that, but I think Commissioner
22 Caputo had it -- she had it exactly right. We can't survey our way into --

23 MR. MORRIS: I understand that, but we can't -- we're dead
24 reckoning right now.

1 Without -- we're looking back at a year-old data sets and
2 trying to decide what it -- what have I done in the last six months that's moving
3 the needle?

4 I won't know that for another six months.

5 CHAIR HANSON: Yes, no, okay, fair enough.

6 In terms of appreciations, Matt, you had a slide that was like,
7 you know, the TTC is the NRC's best kept secret, which I think is unfortunate.
8 Right? It shouldn't -- it actually shouldn't be the best kept secret.

9 And I think there's just a tremendous amount of value that
10 you guys do.

11 And I guess I'll just put in a small plug. I mean, it seems --
12 you noted a lot of the places where you're seeing increased demand for the
13 TTC services, right, from both existing NRC employees, Agreement States,
14 international partners, all of this stuff on a whole range of technical topics.
15 Right? Reactors and materials and everything else.

16 Have you all thought about doing kind of a blue sky exercise
17 that was kind of like, look, if we looked at all of the demand that's either out
18 there today or out there over the next five years, this is what a TTC would look
19 like and this is all of the capability and all the technology and so forth, has that
20 -- have you guys thought about doing something like that?

21 MR. EMRICH: I appreciate the question, Chair Hanson.

22 I guess the short answer is, not officially. I mean, certainly,
23 we have our fingers on the pulse of what's going on from the technical office
24 perspective.

1 We're in frequent communication, in fact, I have two
2 meetings tomorrow with OIP to talk about regulatory -- or international
3 regulatory support and maybe some future forward thinking, you know, what
4 can we do for the international community going forward.

5 Because there's going to be a lot of demand coming from
6 those areas.

7 But as far as an official have we sat down and really mapped
8 out, you know, what's -- what do we anticipate five years from now?

9 And I think anybody at this table is like, good luck with that.
10 Right?

11 I mean, the amount of small modular and advanced, you
12 know, kind of figures right now are out there, but nobody's ponying up the
13 money to actually build one of these things yet.

14 So, it's -- how do you budget for that? It makes it extremely
15 difficult.

16 CHAIR HANSON: There's a little bit of a chicken and egg
17 problem there, I get it, absolutely.

18 MR. EMRICH: But to your point on the TTC, and I mean, I
19 wasn't trying to be cliché with best kept secret, but I've been with the Agency
20 for 13 years.

21 The technical staff I think know about the TTC, but the
22 corporate support staff, they don't get down there.

23 We just hosted folks from OCFO yesterday at TTC for a tour.

24 Small Business and Civil Rights is coming down I think in

1 two weeks, Meredith, to kind of get a feel for what we do, but also to come
2 and tell us what they do.

3 Because the TTC is a little isolated which is -- can be a good
4 thing, can be a bad thing as well.

5 But we are, in some respects, people don't realize the
6 amount of years of experience and technical capacity we have there.

7 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, yes, I really appreciate that.

8 Well, like everybody here, I think there are more -- I've more
9 questions than there is time.

10 But so, thank you for that.

11 I think that's -- it's -- that might be worth considering even as
12 you rightly point out, Matt, that the future is a little murky.

13 So, thanks.

14 With that, I will call on Dale Yeilding from National Treasury
15 Employees Union to give a few minutes of remarks.

16 Dale?

17 MR. YEILDING: Testing one, two?

18 Excellent.

19 Thank you, Chair, staff, union members for this opportunity
20 to speak on a couple of brief union statements about ten issues.

21 I'm the Chapter Executive Vice President and a past
22 President from 2000 to 2012. So, I can bring a little history into some of my
23 comments here.

24 EEO complaints versus an EEO grievance. I am pleased

1 to now see that the Agency's websites regarding the EEO complaint process
2 also includes information about employees' alternative to process the
3 discrimination concerns to a negotiated grievance process along with help of
4 an NTEU union steward.

5 I am not pleased that the Agency sees no benefit to track
6 the many grievance concerns employees have filed, some of which may also
7 claim discrimination.

8 Grievances could be a metric to indicate staff level of
9 dissatisfaction.

10 SBCR continues to discourage EEO grievances.

11 The Agency recently proposed to change the Management
12 Directive 10.161 with a long title, "Civil Rights Program, Affirmative
13 Employment, and Diversity Management Program, and Diversity, Equity, and
14 Inclusion Outreach."

15 A word search on complaint reflected 37 occurrences.

16 A word search on grievance was zero.

17 Thus, again, SBCR is not equally promoting both the formal
18 complaint process along with the employee's alternative to claim a
19 discrimination through the union's process where they can have assistance
20 from a union steward.

21 Age discrimination. Age discrimination is just as illegal as
22 discrimination based upon race, color, religion, gender, et cetera, but
23 somehow is more commonly accepted at the NRC.

24 A question at the recent Regulatory Information Conference

1 to a Commissioner was, how can the Agency hire more younger employees?

2 The answer was so matter of fact and acceptable, both the
3 senior manager asking and the Commissioner answering, without realizing
4 that the question in itself accepts age discrimination at the NRC.

5 Senior SBCR managers suggest changing the term younger
6 to entry-level, not realizing using the same applicant target with a different
7 name is still discriminating.

8 EEO Advisory Committee on Ageism has been analyzing
9 performance appraisal data trying to confirm is a past SBCR analysis
10 confirming age discrimination continues at the NRC.

11 Alternate dispute resolution should be independent from the
12 EEO complaint process.

13 Alternate dispute resolution as managed by SBCR is a
14 voluntary option for resolution of an EEO dispute.

15 Federal agency of the OE Commission, which is a federal
16 agency that has established guidance for alternate dispute resolution directs
17 agencies to have a separate ADR office that functions independently of the
18 traditional EEO office.

19 At the NRC, independence is not established with SBCR
20 administrating both the EEO complaint process and the alternate dispute
21 resolution process.

22 I'll talk a little bit about retention.

23 A lengthy quote here from an OIG report of November 2023,
24 "Ten Most Serious Management Performance Challenges Facing the NRC in

1 '24.”

2 Challenge number five, hiring and retaining sufficiently
3 highly skilled employees to carry out the mission.

4 The OIG went on to say, external and internal stakeholders
5 have raised questions about the NRC's ability to carry out its mission as the
6 Agency's full-time staff declined from approximately 3,700 in '15 to 2,800 in
7 2023.

8 Current Agency annual attrition rates under 10 percent are
9 considered manageable.

10 However, NRC officials acknowledge that hiring in recent
11 years has not kept pace with attrition, even as new staff members are
12 recruited, the challenge to strengthen the organizational culture and maintain
13 a collaborative work environment to retain and develop staff and effectively
14 meet the NRC Mission.

15 So, the focus on that was retention and the focus on this
16 meeting so far has been recruiting.

17 Let me talk a little bit now for the rest of statement here on
18 retention.

19 Past best place to work. When I was president of the union
20 over a decade ago, NRC was rated the number one best place to work in the
21 federal government for four straight years.

22 What happened back then?

23 Flexible work schedules treated in the collective bargain
24 agreement.

1 Telework was born then.

2 Successful negotiations on most matters occurred.

3 Minimal grievances back then.

4 Now, we are rated 23 of 26 mid-size federal agencies near
5 the bottom.

6 Both the OIG report reported concerns for retention and the
7 declining FEV scores need explanation.

8 I'd like to address four areas where -- why the decline.

9 Small workstations. The Agency renovates floors reducing
10 the size of workstations from 80 square feet to 36 square feet, sixth floor of
11 One White Flint.

12 The Agency and the union have reached agreement on two
13 floors now being renovated to 46 square feet but are at an impasse on future
14 renovations.

15 The impasse is based upon the Agency's proposal to keep
16 small workstations with many conference rooms and a large kitchen.

17 The union proposal retains the same number of 80-square
18 foot workstations on the floor but eliminates the unnecessary large kitchen
19 and retains only needed conference rooms.

20 Why the FEV decline?

21 Hoteling. Agency quotes OPM and GSA a decade-old
22 regulations to efficiently use office space. Hoteling takes away employee's
23 workstation that frequently telework.

24 The recent Agency regional proposal moved employees into

1 hoteling with the same number of workstations utilized both before and after
2 the implementation of hoteling.

3 Thus, no efficiency realized.

4 Does efficient use of office space trump employee
5 satisfaction?

6 Why the decline?

7 Agency failure to withhold union dues. The union has filed
8 three grievances involving the Agency's failure to meet its statutory obligation
9 to withhold dues for 59 new union members.

10 The Agency further failed to notify the employees to allow
11 for a waiver appeal before garnishing their paycheck for the past due amounts.

12 Why the decline?

13 Telework, flexible work models. EDO sanctioned two
14 working groups to analyze telework after return from the pandemic.

15 Successful union negotiations involved the increase in
16 telework frequency associated with staff embracing presence with purpose to
17 independently determine the necessary in office versus hybrid needs.

18 The Commission then attempted to override a negotiated
19 agreement committing an unfair labor practice that will proceed to hearing in
20 the fall.

21 Agency scrutiny of the many matters currently in dispute
22 with the union may shed some light on why employees are dissatisfied and
23 FEV scores are declining.

24 NTEU encourages employees to contact the union with

1 issues and consider joining NTEU to support their exclusive representative
2 fighting for you on the front lines.

3 Thank you very much.

4 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Yeilding.

5 And thanks, again, to everyone for the presentation this
6 morning and for all of your efforts in the preparation.

7 And thanks to my colleagues as well for your thoughtful
8 questions and comments.

9 With that, we are adjourned.

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