

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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BRIEFING ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITY

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THURSDAY,
SEPTEMBER 5, 2024

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The Commission met in the Two White Flint North Auditorium, at 10:00 a.m. Christopher T. Hanson, Chair, presiding.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

CHRISTOPHER T. HANSON, Chair
DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner
ANNIE CAPUTO, Commissioner
BRADLEY R. CROWELL, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT:

CARRIE SAFFORD, Secretary of the Commission
BROOKE CLARK, General Counsel

NRC STAFF:

MIRELA GAVRILAS, Executive Director for Operations
MATT BARTLETT, Office of Nuclear Material Safety and
Safeguards

PATRICIA GLENN, Region II

CARDELIA MAUPIN, Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

DONALD PALMROSE, Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

NECOTA STAPLES, Office of the Chief Human Capital
Officer

KEITH TETTER, Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

GINGER WHITE, Office of the Chief Information
Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

SHERYL SANCHEZ, President, National Treasury
Employees Union, Chapter 208

DALE YEILDING, Executive Vice President, National
Treasury Employees Union, Chapter 208

P R O C E E D I N G S

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10:01 a.m.

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MS. GAVRILAS: Oh, thank you. I have that kind of voice that doesn't notice that there's no mic on. Since I have the mic for a few moments, I want to thank some folks and to preview one event.

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I will start by thanking the Commission for putting their trust in me to serve as EDO during this extremely exciting time in our agency's history. I want to also thank to all of you who, over the past six weeks, reached out to express your support and encouragement or provided me with tons of just-in-time information. Thank you.

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On a personal note, I want to thank Ray Furstenau who did an amazing job keeping the trains running during the past few months. Ray, thank you.

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(Applause.)

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MS. GAVRILAS: I cannot tell you how much I value your collegiality and generosity. And, finally, I want to thank everyone who makes events like these look easy. And by the way, standing room-only. I love it. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it.

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Our colleagues in OCIO, SECY, Admin, and OEDO, a heartfelt thank you to all of you. And I'm going to give a shout-out to Ginger White, who is one of our toastmasters, and she will read the questions that were received in advance of the meeting. After the Chair's and the Commissioners' opening remarks, Ginger will ask the questions in order of number of likes received through the app.

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By the way, the microphones in the room are also available if you want to ask questions today.

1 By way of preview, in a month or so, we'll have an EDO town
2 hall where I will present my focus areas and discuss my priorities. But, today,
3 I will join the rest of the staff and listen carefully to our Commission. Towards
4 the end of the meeting, we will also hear from Sheryl Sanchez, the president
5 of Chapter 208 of the National Treasury Employees Union.

6 We are all familiar with the career accomplishments of Chair
7 Hanson, Commissioner Wright, Commissioner Caputo, and Commissioner
8 Crowell. But for this meeting, they allowed me to introduce them with some
9 less-known facts.

10 Chair Hanson will address us first. Chair Hanson was
11 appointed to the Commission in June 2020 and became Chair in January
12 2021. He was reappointed to a five-year term in June of this year. In case
13 you didn't know, the Chair regularly hosts informal coffee chats with a small
14 group of employees from different organizations. I encourage you to attend
15 such a chat if you have the opportunity.

16 In one recent chat, some of our NRAN class kicked off the
17 conversation by asking a very profound question. You're the Chair, but, if you
18 were a chair, what kind of chair would you be? His answer: a leather
19 wingback with a side table, lamp, and book. We wouldn't expect anything
20 less, right?

21 (Applause.)

22 MS. GAVRILAS: Next, we'll hear from Commissioner
23 Wright, who joined the Commission in 2018. Previously, he served on the
24 South Carolina Public Service Commission and was an elected councilman
25 and mayor in Irmo, South Carolina. Commissioner Wright also served on the
26 South Carolina House of Representatives. Commissioner Wright and his

1 daughter are both colon cancer survivors and fierce advocates for screening.
2 Before COVID broke his streak, he had umpired baseball for 50 consecutive
3 years.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. GAVRILAS: After that, we will hear from the
6 Honorable Annie Caputo, who was sworn in as a Commissioner of the U.S.
7 Nuclear Regulatory Commission on August 9th, 2022 and is serving the
8 remainder of her five-year term ending June 2026. Commissioner Caputo
9 previously served on the NRC Commission from 2018 to 2021.
10 Commissioner Caputo has over two decades of government and private-
11 sector experience in nuclear energy and security policy. In addition to her
12 many accomplishments, she brings ingenuity to her hobbies as an avid quilter
13 and crafter.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. GAVRILAS: And, lastly, we will hear from
16 Commissioner Crowell who joined the Commission in August 2022. He
17 comes from a family of public servants and was director of the Nevada
18 Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. He also served the
19 Department of Energy and multiple members of Congress. In his senior year
20 of high school, he was Nevada state champion for both the slalom and the
21 gain slalom. He also climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with his brother, Todd. He
22 inherited his adventurous spirit from his father and uncle, who, as children in
23 the 1950s, would climb the hilltop outside their hometown to feel the way the
24 wind, dust, and rocks reached them across the Nevada desert from above-
25 ground testing at the then Nevada test site.

26 (Applause.)

1 MS. GAVRILAS: And with this, it's my pleasure to turn the
2 meeting over to Chair Hanson.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Mirela. That was great. I
5 learned something. I didn't know about all that. Thank you. And good
6 morning, everyone. I always look forward to this opportunity to get together
7 on a morning like this and then to celebrate this afternoon with the award
8 ceremony. I hope everyone had a nice summer and was able to take some
9 time for themselves to refresh and recharge. As we enter the fall and the new
10 fiscal year, I'm so proud of the work that this agency has accomplished and
11 I'm excited about the new opportunities and challenges we're going to have in
12 the coming year.

13 We're facing a lot of changes here at the NRC that are
14 influenced by technology, policy, and demographics. One thing that will not
15 change is our fundamental mission. That is to license and regulate the
16 nation's civilian use of radioactive materials to provide reasonable assurance
17 of adequate protection of public health and safety, to promote common
18 defense and security, and to protect the environment.

19 We recently named Mirela Gavrilas as the new EDO, and
20 I'm excited for her and her near-term priorities. Filling the EDO position has
21 created, as many of you know, a whole cascade of senior leadership changes.

22 Beside the EDO, we've recently hired an OPA director, Hal
23 Pittman, who has a wealth, brings a wealth of experience from both active duty
24 and civilian duty at the Department of Defense and in the private sector. As
25 well as OPA, we hired a new CFO, Owen Barwell, who has both government
26 and corporate experience and is going to, I know, bring a fresh set of eyes.

1 Jennifer Golder, congratulations, will be taking over as our chief human capital
2 officer; and James Corbett will be leading admin. Scott Flanders,
3 congratulations on your appointment as our chief information officer. I won't
4 go through all of the changes that I know so many of you have seen, but I'll
5 thank the staff for stepping up into these important roles.

6 Along with internal shifts, we're also seeing external
7 movement that's going to impact our work and that's impacting our work today.
8 The ADVANCE Act is the most recent example of strong external support for
9 both nuclear power and for the NRC, and I appreciate Congress for its
10 bipartisan vote of confidence in the agency's ability to accomplish our mission
11 in this dynamic environment. And while a cultural shift focusing on efficiency
12 through risk-informing and continuous learning was already underway at the
13 NRC, the ADVANCE Act passage will help us accelerate it. We're already
14 making changes, as so many of you know, to environmental reviews, physical
15 security requirements, and the like, consistent with Congress's direction. It's
16 about continuing this mind set change and focusing on our efforts by gaining
17 efficiency through risk-informing.

18 I want to emphasize that efficiency is not just about cutting
19 time and money just for the sake of cutting. This is about leveraging the vast
20 licensing experience we've built over the last five decades in this agency and
21 continuing to learn, continuing to improve the way we meet our safety mission.
22 As with the Be riskSMART, I expect us to risk-inform everything we do so that
23 we focus on what's most important and safety significant.

24 Throughout my tenure, I've discussed my vision for building
25 an environment of high trust and high confidence. Building a strong and
26 sustainable relationship centered on trust is a top priority for me and the other

1 leaders at the agency. We need to be able to trust one another as things
2 change around us, trust that we have the ability to change, to meet the
3 challenges and to overcome them.

4 One of the things that I admire most about the dedicated
5 workforce at the NRC is your ability to take lessons learned and apply them to
6 the next big challenge. I know you'll continue to do that over the next several
7 years as we tackle new technologies and address novel issues.

8 If you've listened to me speak in various forums over the
9 past few years, I hope you've heard me express how much confidence I have
10 in this agency. I firmly believe that the 50-year body of knowledge that this
11 agency has developed allows us to have confidence in our technical
12 capabilities, allows us to leverage our vast intellectual capital to make better,
13 smarter, more efficient, and more durable regulatory decisions. We should
14 have confidence in our abilities and confidence in our ability to change.
15 Together, with trust and confidence, we can face the future, whatever that may
16 bring. Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Good morning, everyone.
19 So, Chair, thank you for your opening remarks. I believe you're a comfortable
20 chair, too. So thank you, Mirela, for opening the meeting. And by the way,
21 welcome to your first all-hands meeting as EDO, and I appreciate the fun facts
22 to know. That was good.

23 For those of you who are here, you know, there's a lot of
24 opportunities for you to hear from us during the year, but this is one of these
25 meetings where I really like it because this is our opportunity to hear from you
26 and to listen and to understand what is going on in the world that you work in

1 each and every day. So, one, I wanted to take a moment to thank you for
2 coming and for being here for those of you who are in the building and came
3 down to this room, to those who are listening in the regions, to those of you at
4 the TTC, to those who are attending virtually, and to the residents joining us
5 from all across the country. So thank you for coming and being a part of the
6 conversation today.

7 You know, as I was preparing remarks for this morning, I
8 was struck by how much has changed around the agency just over the last
9 year. As it always do and will continue to do, on top of work, life happens,
10 too. For many of you, this has been a good year, maybe even a great year,
11 so congratulations for those of you who have experienced that. But if you
12 have had difficulty or having difficulties now, I want to remind you that the NRC
13 has people and programs available to help you navigate your way through
14 those circumstances, so please reach out and let them help you.

15 On the NRC work front, as you all know, we have a new
16 EDO. Again, congratulations, Mirela. We've had numerous other changes
17 to the senior management at the agency, which you heard the Chair mention
18 just a minute ago. And I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to single
19 out and publicly thank Ray Furstenau for your hands-on efforts and just
20 running this agency as interim EDO. Thank you, thank you, thank you, and
21 congratulations on a job very well done.

22 (Applause.)

23 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: And, recently, as you heard,
24 Congress passed the ADVANCE Act, which should not be a surprise to any
25 of us because we've known for several years that Congress was intent on
26 passing it. So out of that, the one thing that I can guarantee you is change.

1 I know that, for some of you, the passage of this act represents the unknown.
2 For others, it's a new opportunity, and I know some of you are just hoping it
3 doesn't impact your day-to-day work too much. To all of you, I think we need
4 to understand that Congress is instructing all of us about what they want us to
5 do. Some may even say they're telling us. An overwhelming majority of
6 Congress on both sides of aisle has clearly said that the status quo at the NRC
7 is not going to be the future of the agency, so we must change in order to
8 move forward.

9 But what is change? The word change is a verb. I guess
10 you all know that. It means to make someone or something different, to alter
11 or modify, to replace something with something else, to substitute one thing
12 for another. Change can be difficult. Change can be fun, too. Change can
13 be both exciting and scary, many times at the same time. And for you
14 Swifties out there, because I know you're out there, as Taylor Swift sings,
15 change can be miserable and magical.

16 Congress also wants us to be efficient. Now, the word
17 efficient means working or operating quickly and effectively in an organized
18 way, to use resources, such as time, materials, or energy, well without wasting
19 any. Now, Congress didn't change our focus on safety. In fact, it should
20 actually concentrate our focus and attention more those things that impact
21 safety. That's still our mission. It also doesn't mean simply working more
22 hours or trying to make do with less. It means we're going to have to be
23 smarter about how we work and ensuring that we're using our resources in
24 the best possible way, and I know we can do it. I know it.

25 We're being instructed to change and be efficient in enabling
26 the safe and secure use of nuclear technologies, not just in the United States

1 either but around the world. The collective you in the audience, whoever you
2 are today, are some of the brightest minds in the entire federal government.
3 Since day one, I've been impressed by the technical knowledge, the creativity,
4 and the ingenuity present at the NRC, so I know we can evolve.

5 We can continue to be leaders around the world in our
6 regulation of nuclear technologies, but there's an urgency today that is new, a
7 national security urgency many will tell you, a global energy security issue, as
8 well. And the NRC is being challenged to change and be more efficient in
9 meeting its safety and security mission in order to meet the moment that is
10 before us and the world we live in today.

11 I have the utmost confidence in you, all of the staff, to lead
12 our agency into the future and accomplish what Congress is asking us to do.
13 Reasonable assurance of adequate protection and to protect people in the
14 environment is still our focus. That's the strike zone, as you've heard me say
15 many times.

16 But we're being asked to change and to be more efficient in
17 meeting our safety and security mission. We must now focus on how we're
18 going to comply with Congress's instructions, which means we'll probably not
19 do things the same way we always have. And I know working together as
20 one toward a common goal, we can do anything. We can accomplish it.

21 I believe the selection of Mirela as EDO will help drive this
22 change, too. She is a change agent, but she's not alone in this agency in that
23 regard. I know there's a lot of work to get done, and you have permission, as
24 Brooke told me one time, you have permission to be bold, to use history and
25 historical data to risk-inform your work and, if we don't mind who gets the
26 credit, I believe there's no limit to what we can accomplish or how soon we

1 can accomplish it.

2 So next month, we're celebrating our 50th anniversary.
3 We're in a position to change the world with what we do. I truly believe that.
4 I just came back from Kenya on Saturday. In fact, my body still thinks I'm
5 there. I've seen how the work that you're doing all across the agency is
6 setting the stage for people around the world to have access to safe nuclear
7 technologies. It's true and it's real the work you're doing is making the world
8 safer. The work that you're doing is helping provide medicines to cure
9 diseases. The work that you're doing is helping people around the world
10 have access to electricity, sometimes for the first time, clean water, and more
11 abundant food.

12 But we can always improve. That's what they're asking us
13 to do because the world needs us. So thank you for your work, and thank
14 you for your participation today. I look forward to questions. Thank you,
15 Chair.

16 (Applause.)

17 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Wright.
18 Commissioner Caputo.

19 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So now that I'm going three,
20 I'm going to associate myself with the remarks of my colleagues who have
21 already spoken, and I want to add my thanks in particular to Ray for jumping
22 into the breach and for Mirela for taking on the mantle of leadership and to the
23 staff who worked hard to organize and support today's event. This is a big
24 event for the entire agency every year, and it comes off flawlessly, and that's
25 a testament to the work that goes into this. So thank you very much for that.
26 And to all the staff that are participating, whether it's in-person or online, I think

1 it's really important for all of us to be here, understand the topics that are under
2 discussion and understand the concerns that are shared. So thank you for
3 being here, for participating, and contributing.

4 Thank you also to the new employees participating for the
5 first time. So welcome to the team. We're glad you're here, and we're eager
6 for you to contribute to the mission. So thanks to everyone for whom this is
7 a first meeting.

8 I also want to thank my office and everyone in it for all they
9 do to support me. And, in particular, along with leadership changes, Marilyn
10 Diaz Maldonado, who I know most of you are probably familiar with, has
11 agreed to serve as my chief of staff, and I am immensely grateful for her
12 contributions and her leadership.

13 And, lastly, a warm welcome to any members of the public
14 that are tuning in today to understand the concerns within the agency and the
15 challenges that we are wrestling with.

16 So electricity demand is growing. You've heard me say this
17 before. The rate at which demand is growing is itself increasing and
18 accelerating. There's a drumbeat of news articles recently on the power
19 needs associated with data centers and AI. That's only one piece of it. I
20 think most of us understand that there is an energy transition underway here
21 and abroad. Anyone who is in the garage with a Tesla understands the
22 challenges of electrifying transportation and just the focus in general on
23 increasing electrification as a means of decarbonizing energy use, so these
24 are increasing efforts globally to develop nuclear energy to meet those needs.

25 So there's a domestic component to this in terms of meeting
26 our energy security needs at home. There's also a strategic imperative

1 geopolitically for the U.S. to be recognized globally as a the preeminent leader
2 in nuclear technology. So we, at the NRC, are the gatekeepers for the safe
3 use of nuclear here at home, and that is and remains our first priority. But
4 our regulatory decision also reach beyond our borders and are respected
5 around the world, so the manner in which we execute our mission impacts
6 national energy security needs and strategic objectives. So our mission is
7 incredibly important and not just for the safety and security of the American
8 people but also as part of this much bigger picture.

9 Congress passed the ADVANCE Act in recognition of this
10 bigger picture and the growing importance of our role. The act provides some
11 authorities to better empower us to execute our mission, but it also sets
12 expectations with regard to efficiency and improving performance. I've been
13 briefed on the staff's approach to implementing the actions so far, and I'm
14 pleased with what I have heard. We can't meet tomorrow's challenges with
15 yesterday's practices, so the question is how will we use today to prepare.

16 I believe it starts with leadership, and I'm very pleased to
17 support Mirela Gavrilas as our new EDO. I think she's off to a strong start.
18 She is focused on restoring trust in leadership, implementing the ADVANCE
19 Act, and reinvigorating the use of Be riskSMART. So while there are many
20 objectives that fit under this umbrella, I agree with those priorities and support
21 them. My expectation for Mirela and her leadership team is clear
22 communication going forward and that they lead by example. Actions must
23 be consistent with their messages.

24 Some of you, depending on your role, may be asked to do
25 things differently, and I don't mean that as a euphemism for work harder. I
26 think, as an agency and as a team, we need to work smarter by using

1 riskSMART, adhering to the principles of good regulation, and setting
2 priorities. While much of this is incumbent on leaders to lead, I'm confident
3 that all of you will find ways to contribute your work ideas.

4 There are challenges ahead, and the spotlight is on the
5 NRC. It is your time to shine. I am proud of what this team is capable of,
6 and I am eager to see the list of accomplishments grow. So thank you very
7 much.

8 (Applause.)

9 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Caputo.
10 Commissioner Crowell.

11 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll
12 associate myself with my colleagues' remarks, as well. I have remarks
13 prepared that I'm not going to use, so enjoy the ride here for a minute. I'm
14 going to keep it short, too, because I think the most valuable part of these
15 events are the Q&As that we'll get into, and I know many of you have them in
16 the room and online, and we'll allow plenty of time for that.

17 I'm on or about today my two-year anniversary at the NRC.
18 It feels like it's been two days and twenty years at the same time. I remember
19 last year's all-hands meeting, and it feels like it was just yesterday. If we did
20 one in '22, I can't remember because I was so new to the agency. I'm not
21 even sure if it happened, but that's how long it feels like I've been here at some
22 level. But that's a good commentary because every day is a new adventure
23 and you learn something new. But one of the big changes since when I
24 started here is how many people in the room and how many faces I get to see,
25 and that makes a big difference for, I think, how we all operate and certainly
26 for how I reflect on the importance of my job as a Commissioner.

1 You know, let me just get something out of the way here.
2 FEVS scores are on all our minds. FEVS scores are not the end-all be-all,
3 but they're an important indicator of how an agency is both performing and
4 their culture. Having followed the NRC for a long time during my career and
5 then, you know, unexpectedly embarking on becoming a Commissioner, I was
6 excited. I was coming to a place that had the best, you know, one of if not
7 the top rating in FEVS of a culture and workplace. And I was like, well, you
8 know, for all the challenges at the NRC, at least they got that going for them.
9 I can join that, I can be a positive part of that.

10 But then, you know, COVID happened, you know. COVID
11 was out there and happened, and then when I got here things were changing,
12 you know, and the FEVS scores were declining, and I didn't understand why.
13 I still don't fully understand why, partly because they're a single indicator. But
14 what I do know is we can and we should find our way back to the top of the
15 list. There's no reason not to. But to get there, it's going to require all of us
16 sharing a vision, a mission, and working together and supporting each other.
17 So I do hope that we can get there. Actually, I'm confident we can get there.

18 You know, I often forget that these are open meetings, that
19 the public is able to tune into, so bear in mind that this is what they're seeing
20 of our agency when we have the exchange today. And more importantly, if
21 you're a new employee and this is your first meeting, this is an impression that
22 our new employees are going to take forward with them. And so we should
23 not shy away from hard or challenging topics or questions in this discussion,
24 but we should all focus on how we positively resolve them and move forward
25 because that is going to set the tone going forward for how this agency
26 operates and that's going to be the difference-maker in both our personal and

1 professional lives. Your happiness at work impacts your happiness at home
2 and vice versa.

3 So we need to have that workplace family feel back here
4 again, and a lot of that is going to be coming together around what this shared
5 mission is. Our shared mission and, you know, role of the agency has been
6 changing a lot over the past years. I don't think any single agency has seen
7 more legislation in the last eight to ten years targeted directly at them. And
8 that's not a bad thing. Sometimes, it's not even a good thing. But it is a
9 unique thing in terms of Congress acting on any specific topic in such an active
10 way. Nuclear is one of those few things that has Congress's attention and
11 also results in legislation being passed. And so part of the reason for that is
12 because there are so many new and exciting things happening in the field of
13 nuclear energy. We need to recognize that, and we need to adapt to it.

14 I agree with my colleagues that, going forward, it's not about
15 working harder. If you didn't already work hard, you wouldn't be here. It's
16 about working smarter, which is a nice thing to say, but what does that mean?
17 It means taking an honest look at how we're prioritizing our work. Old
18 practices that maybe we don't need to do anymore or we can do in a more
19 efficient way using technology, you know, there are a whole variety of things
20 that can be done to work a smarter, more efficient way, that don't involve
21 cutting corners and don't involve having to just simply work harder, and we
22 need to get there.

23 And, you know, I'm encouraged to hear that Mirela is going
24 to have an EDO town hall here soon because I hope you're hearing similar
25 things at that town hall and probably more granularity on how we're going to
26 move forward on all these things. And if there's a disconnect between what

1 you hear today from the Commission and what you're hearing from the EDO
2 at the town hall, then we have a problem. We have a gulf we need to -- we
3 have a bridge that we need to build there. But, you know, there should be
4 commonality in how we're approaching all these things.

5 I think we're ready to turn the corner, quite personally, with
6 the new leadership changes that all of my colleagues have talked about. I'm
7 really excited. I think they are the right people. They're the change-makers.
8 There's going to be more change coming, but we're going to set the stage for
9 a new day and it's going to start with the EDO and the other positions that
10 were mentioned. And I'll add my huge thanks to Ray, as well as Scott Morris,
11 for keeping these moving and not just head above water but actually moving
12 forward during their time as acting EDO. We're ready to do this. I'm ready
13 to do this, and I think all of you are, as well, as indicated by the fact that you're
14 here today.

15 One more topic, and then I'll stop blustering here and we'll
16 get to questions. I think the secret sauce to any successful organization is
17 communication, and I think it's the place where there's the most work that
18 needs to be done at the NRC. Communication from the top down, from the
19 bottom up, side to side, between you and your immediate supervisor, you
20 know, at all levels. We need to be breaking down silos, we need to be
21 communicating with each other in formal ways and in informal ways. It is
22 amazing what informal communication will do for the learning curve, for, you
23 know, your colleagues who have been here a long time but maybe are in a
24 different part of the agency. And if you're a new employee, those informal
25 communications are huge.

26 And so we need to make sure we're prioritizing and valuing

1 those things, and it's good to see a room full of folks here today and online
2 because that's how collaboration happens is when we're all together.

3 I think we often make a case that we are very good at
4 communicating at this agency, but the amount of information flying around
5 does not equal good communication. It needs to be targeted. It needs to be
6 more than just something that's said one day and then forgotten about the
7 next. There needs to be a direct line to what's being said one day and where
8 we're going, where we want to get and how we're going to get there. So I'm
9 confident that the Commission understands that, and I'm even more confident
10 that our new executive leadership understands that and will be working hard
11 to make those improvements because I have a feeling a lot of the questions
12 we get into today are things that you're going to ask about that are kind of
13 mysteries to you that shouldn't be, that you should know more about because
14 we have more robust communication at all levels.

15 So with that, thank you all for what you do. You know,
16 every agency is defined by their employees, so you're the heart of this agency.
17 And I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you all.

18 (Applause.)

19 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Crowell.
20 So, Ginger, thank you for being here today, for helping manage the question-
21 and-answer thing. I'm going to leave it up to you and folks over here to kind
22 of alternate or however you want to do it between questions that are -- oh,
23 sorry. Okay. Very good. Even better. Thank you for being here. I really
24 appreciate it.

25 All right. Well, are you going to bail me out now?

26 MS. GLENN: Yes, I'm going to bail you out.

1 CHAIR HANSON: That would be great.

2 MS. GLENN: Okay. So thank you so much, and good
3 morning, everyone. My name is Patricia Glenn. I am facilitating our Q&A
4 portion. Ginger is here to help me with the reading of the questions. Again,
5 this is our annual 2024 all-employee meeting. I want to give a special thank
6 you to our distinguished Commission for sharing their insights during opening
7 remarks and also a special thanks to our EDO, Mirela, with those fun facts.
8 Let's give them all a hand again.

9 (Applause.)

10 MS. GLENN: Also, special thanks and shout out to those
11 that are joining us virtually via Teams and webcast and those that are here in
12 person today. You all collectively, our amazing NRC team near and far, make
13 this possible. So thank you for joining us, too.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. GLENN: So to quickly shift gears to Q&A, to give you
16 all an overview for how this is going to work. We are going to begin with our
17 pre-submitted questions that were submitted. We're going to go through
18 those that were most liked. And from that portion, we'll transition to the room
19 for in-person questions. If we have additional time, we'll take additional
20 questions from our pre-submitted list, but that will be our role for today.

21 After, Ginger is going to help us with those questions, and
22 we'll go through them. So I do ask everyone just, you know, please make
23 your questions clear and concise. Please allot yourself about one-minute
24 time. The purpose of that is to make sure we can get through as many
25 questions, hear as many voices, as possible today.

26 So with that, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Ginger

1 to read our first question.

2 MS. WHITE: Thank you. All right. With NRC staff trust
3 in the objectivity and integrity of NRC Commissioners and NRC executive
4 leadership at an all-time low, with an annual exodus for sweetheart positions
5 in the industry, what can be done to restore credibility and confidence that
6 executive-level decision-making is not industry biased and actually serves the
7 public interest?

8 CHAIR HANSON: I will dive into that one, I suppose.
9 Look, I mean, everybody in this room, everybody up on this dais, are dedicated
10 public servants, and I don't question that at all. It doesn't mean we always
11 agree on everything, but people come here and we all work hard and we
12 understand that there are lots of expectations from us, on us, from a lot of
13 different directions. But, fundamentally, people understand the work in front
14 of us, and we're all dedicated to it. And I don't question that on a daily basis,
15 and I'm not going to start today.

16 Some of this, I think, in terms of building trust, also comes
17 down to accountability. There's shared accountability, you know. You all
18 are accountable to each other to uphold the norms and standards for
19 performance in the workplace across multiple dimensions. You all are
20 accountable to your senior leadership. Senior leadership are accountable to
21 the Commission, and I think the Commission is accountable to you all, right,
22 for our work. And in turn, the Commission is accountable to a whole range
23 of external parties. Oftentimes, the American public but also their elected
24 representatives. But, fundamentally, we're all accountable to the American
25 people, and I think remembering that and behaving in ways that reinforce that,
26 as I see so often in this agency, is just one of the path forward here.

1 MS. GLENN: Are there any other thoughts from any
2 Commissioners?

3 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I don't know that I would look
4 at the exodus of staff as an example that something is wrong with the agency.
5 If anything, I think it's quite the opposite. I think it is a signal of the talent and
6 expertise that gets cultivated at this agency. I think it's a testament to the
7 caliber of the staff that are here that they are sought after outside the agency.

8 So I would encourage you to look at it that way. I think it
9 creates opportunities for those that are here. When talent leaves, we need
10 to be cultivating additional talent to step into their shoes, and that creates
11 opportunities, I think, for advancement for the folks that are here.

12 So I wouldn't look at that as a problem and a disadvantage.
13 Outside the agency, people change positions, change companies, change
14 roles a lot more often than is common within the federal government, and
15 that's because they seek opportunities elsewhere. So just I would urge you
16 to look at this as an opportunity for you and your career development to
17 develop additional skills and seek out the opportunities that open up when
18 people make that decision to move on.

19 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'll just add quickly, if I may.
20 Specific to the comment about, you know, executive leadership adopting
21 industry bias, you know, it's a bit of a misnomer in my opinion. We have a
22 process in place here to ensure that that doesn't happen, like most federal
23 agencies do but certainly regulatory agencies. 99.9 percent of my views are
24 informed by the information that comes up from you, the staff, and from my
25 own staff helping me distill and interpret and analyze that.

26 So if there's bias, I'd be shocked. I don't think there is bias

1 because what comes up is pretty straightforward and technical for the most
2 part. It doesn't usually, you know, have a lot of bias. But that's what informs
3 our views as Commissioners is what comes up through our process of the
4 staff. So I'm not sure that industry bent that was mentioned in the question
5 is fully accurate.

6 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I was going to hold my
7 tongue a little bit on this, but everything that goes on and in this question,
8 believe it or not, as critical as it may sound, there's opportunity inside this
9 question. And that's what I try to look to. You know, you heard I was a colon
10 cancer survivor. I look for the opportunities to good stuff. In our principles
11 of good regulation, we have to be externally aware. We have to be in contact
12 with those people who may be industry, may not be industry. We may agree
13 with them, we may not agree with them, but we can inform ourselves through
14 them, and I think that's critically important. We haven't always done that as
15 an agency.

16 Opportunity is going to be in this agency when we see
17 growth in this agency. And we have an opportunity right now for growth in
18 this agency because of what's going on in the world around us. The demand
19 for energy is huge. It's real, and it's there, and you have the ability to help
20 that and to enable that safe use and safe deployment of some of these nuclear
21 technologies out there. And the sooner that we can get some of these people
22 through that come to us and they meet the safety mission strike zone, then
23 the sooner that we can tackle the problems of energy security around the
24 world, climate issues. I mean, we're the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
25 That's who we are. Nuclear is, by all accounts from anybody you look at,
26 that's the biggest source. That's going to be the cleanest and biggest

1 available technology out there to meet those needs and to solve those things.

2 So if we allow the agency to grow, there's going to be more
3 opportunity for you. People are leaving the agency. I get it. I understand.
4 And I think Commissioner Caputo is right on in her description of those
5 opportunities. I've got staff who are doing that. I think if it's there and it's a
6 great opportunity, man, I'm all for it. But also that's going to create
7 opportunity here. And if we make the agency grow more, your FEVS scores
8 are going to go up because opportunity is there. We'll return to where we
9 were in that 2012 time frame, right, when we were the number one agency in
10 government. So look at the opportunity side.

11 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I'm just going to add to that a
12 little bit on external awareness. Our principal state independence does not
13 imply isolation, so there is room for us to improve our external awareness. I
14 think passage of the ADVANCE Act reflects that. I think we need to do a
15 better job of understanding the field of business that is coming toward us and
16 understanding the work that is coming so we can better prepare for it, but we
17 also need to do a better job, I think, of listening to being open-minded about
18 and respecting the diverse views that we heard, whether it's for
19 Commissioners at the Commission level or all of the staff that interact with
20 each other and interact with stakeholders through public meetings.

21 So I think this is one area where I expect leadership to do a
22 better job of modeling what's expected and helping the agency improve its
23 external awareness, so we can improve our responsiveness to conditions
24 outside the agency.

25 MS. GLENN: Thank you for that question and those
26 responses. Ginger, if you would, please read our second most-liked

1 question.

2 MS. WHITE: With efficiency being a major topic of the
3 ADVANCE Act, is the Commission planning to address lengthy review times
4 for voting on rulemakings and other vote papers?

5 CHAIR HANSON: This is the annual question on this topic.
6 Look, I think, you know, my view is that Congress kind of didn't distinguish
7 necessarily between the staff and the Commission itself. I think it's an
8 expectation for all of us. And so I think, you know, this is part of that shared
9 accountability that I spoke to earlier, and I think every opportunity that every
10 senior leader has in this agency to lead by example that they and we should
11 do that.

12 And so I will personally commit to continue to reviewing the
13 papers in front of us in a prompt manner. I know there's always areas for me
14 to improve in that area, and I'm going to continue to do that.

15 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So I agree with the Chair.
16 There's opportunity for all of us, and I don't think that the ADVANCE Act, it
17 doesn't tell us we're different than the rest of the agency. So we have to look
18 at ways to be more efficient, while, at the same time, we have to be collegial
19 as a Commission. Unfortunately, I mean, we lose commissioners at times
20 Right now, we're down to four. We have been to three in the last few years.
21 We still got a lot done with three, and we got a lot done with four here.

22 So I do believe that we are trying. Our staffs are trying.
23 But some things can't move as quickly as they need to just because of the
24 circumstances of a new commissioner coming onboard, and they've got to be
25 given the opportunity, the collegial opportunity to get up to speed, to get their
26 staff on, and to get to where they can feel comfortable casting votes.

1 In the interim, we meet individually with each other. Our
2 staffs meet constantly, and we try to develop those papers and other issues,
3 we try to develop a common list that we all feel that we can move quicker on.
4 So we are trying.

5 And I appreciate the question. And, yes, we will continue
6 to try to get better ourselves.

7 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I'm going to start by noting
8 that my very first day at the Commission Annette Vietti-Cook delivered three
9 copy paper boxes of voting matters to my office. The list of voting matters,
10 you know, was for a long time at three pages lapsing onto four. And I think,
11 at this point, certainly, it's a reflection of Chairman Hanson's leadership that
12 it's more down to two, occasionally lapsing onto three. And there will always
13 be a steady throughput of voting matters. There will always be
14 commissioners who take time to deliberate and understand issues thoroughly.
15 Some issues more than others require different levels of attention.

16 But I would also make the point that one of our principles is
17 that regulation should not unjustifiably be in a state of transition. And when
18 that's the case and requiring Commission attention, it takes our attention away
19 from other issues. So to the extent that there is sound regulatory analysis
20 underpinning the regulatory changes that the staff is proposing, that makes, I
21 think, for a much more straightforward path through the Commission that
22 everything has a sound foundation and regulatory analysis and is prepared for
23 a data-driven decision-making by the Commission. So that is one
24 observation I would make.

25 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And I'll add a little flavor
26 and my own observation. And I'll play the new guy card until I'm not the new

1 guy person anymore. When I got here two years ago, I was fortunate I got
2 an electronic trove of things instead of three boxes, but it was equally
3 intimidating. And, you know, what it didn't come with was any guide. It didn't
4 say start at the oldest one, it didn't say start at the newest one. It didn't say
5 anything. It just was all these things with dates and what they are and how
6 long they've been there, and I didn't know where to start. And probably, for
7 everything on the list, there's a reason why it has either languished or it's
8 moved more quickly or it went fast and then it slowed down for some reason.
9 And, over time, you learn the reasons for why things are on the list and what
10 has languished and, sometimes, it's valid and, sometimes, it's less valid.

11 But I also assumed that the pace at which things were
12 moving were well known by the staff who had sent them up because I thought
13 that there was good communication happening and that feedback was getting
14 to staff who draft these papers or that they would ask their supervisors, hey,
15 what's going on and their supervisor would have an answer or find an answer.
16 I don't think that's happening because I don't think that volume of things that
17 have been voted on or the pace is really the point. It's the why, and that
18 needs to be communicated better so folks can understand whether it's
19 something they worked on or just something they're interested in, what the
20 status is on the list and why and what the prospects are.

21 So I think, again, communication can help address some of
22 the misperception here on time to review something versus urgency versus a
23 date on a paper. So, hopefully, that helps a little bit.

24 CHAIR HANSON: And just I want to thank all three of my
25 colleagues for your remarks on this topic, and I want to associate myself with
26 so many of them. You know, our former EDO, Margie Doane, she loved the

1 African proverb that, if you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far,
2 go together. And I think that's true in a lot of parts in the agency, but I think
3 it's also true here on the Commission. And that's not contrary, I think, to the
4 kind of striving that we're doing with regard to efficiency or those expectations
5 that are put on us. I think we're all focused on going far and for the long term,
6 and so that oftentimes means that we're working closely together and
7 collegially on fairly complex matters.

8 MS. GLENN: Thank you for that question and those
9 responses. Ginger, let's try to get in one more for right now for our third most-
10 liked question.

11 MS. WHITE: The ADVANCE Act has placed an increased
12 emphasis on efficiency. Has there been any determination or clarity on what
13 is meant by efficiency in this context? Is the intention to be efficient with
14 respect to schedules or to be more efficient with respect to hours charged to
15 each action? Are we just telling staff to push harder and do more, or is there
16 a push to spend resources to find specific inefficiencies?

17 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: So I gave you the definition
18 of efficiency when I spoke a while ago. But I think our architect of Be
19 riskSMART is right here. Mirela, isn't that you?

20 MS. GAVRILAS: One of them. One.

21 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: One of them. So she, as
22 EDO, is going to have the responsibility for driving that, and that interpretation
23 of efficiency will apply to the agency. But I think it's, you know, effective use
24 of resources, time, people, and that includes money, as well. We do have a
25 fiduciary responsibility, in my opinion, to be responsible with the resources
26 that applicants are spending for us to review things. I think we owe them that

1 fiduciary responsibility, and that requires us to be conscious of, you know,
2 working smarter and getting things done more timely or efficient or whatever
3 the word is that you want to use.

4 So, Mirela, it's going to be on your plate, and I look forward
5 to helping you.

6 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: One of the things that I
7 reflect on is last year's Jam and how workload management was one of the
8 topics that got a lot of attention during the Jam. There was an effort to follow
9 the Jam on workload management. It certainly didn't, I think, yield as much
10 as I was hoping for. I'd like to see management take on the issue, leadership
11 and management take on the issue a little bit more and make decisions about
12 focusing on high-priority work, making decisions about low-priority work that
13 can be shed or deferred, to make sure that staff have an appropriate amount
14 of time to focus on the highest priorities without feeling overworked and
15 stressed. It's always up to supervisors and management to make sure that
16 all team members are pulling their weight, but it's also incumbent upon
17 leadership and management to make sure that we're not expecting more from
18 a time than they are capable of accomplishing. And I really would like to see
19 more done in that way to address the work that's being done.

20 Going forward, one of the challenges I see in that spirit is
21 our workload is likely to become less predictable, not more predictable. And
22 we can't afford for agility to just be an empty word. So I think the challenge
23 for leadership and management that I see is making sure that people have
24 opportunities to train and cross-train and qualify for a range of work so that we
25 are more flexible and can shift to meet the challenges as the workload
26 changes.

1 So those are two points that I would make on that issue.

2 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And I'll just add two
3 comments really quickly. I think we're all trying to not jump in if we don't have
4 anything to add, but we all feel passionate about this, which is why all of us
5 are answering these questions.

6 Going forward, the workload is going to be less predictable.
7 It's also not a question of sheer quantity. It's probably going to be, the more
8 challenging side of it is going to be on the complexity. It may be a lower
9 volume but a higher complexity or variety, and we need to account for that in
10 our efficiencies and skill sets and things like that.

11 I would hope that many of the concepts and ideas for how
12 we can become more efficient come up through you, the staff, either through
13 a formal mechanism or an informal mechanism. The people that are closest
14 to the work are the ones who are going to be able to most readily identify
15 efficiencies that are appropriate and can be implemented, so I hope that we
16 hear ideas from all of you. I'm encouraging you to do it either through your
17 immediate supervisor, up through the EDO, up through any of the
18 Commissioners, and I know my doors are always open. So don't be shy. If
19 you've got ways that you think we could be more efficient without undermining
20 our safety case, without cutting corners, I'm sure it's there because doing
21 things the way we've always done is not always the most efficient.
22 Sometimes, it's necessary; but, oftentimes, it is due for an update, so please
23 bring forward any ideas you have for efficiency.

24 CHAIR HANSON: I also feel passionately, but I don't have
25 anything to add.

26 MS. GLENN: Thank you. Thank you. So at this time,

1 we're going to open up the floor to the room for questions, so feel free, make
2 your way to the microphone. As folks are coming to the microphone, I do
3 want to give another shout-out thank you to the NRC staff that submitted
4 questions in advance and for all of you that took time to vote on those
5 questions. You just heard our three most-liked questions that were submitted
6 in advance.

7 And with that, we are going to transition to the room. We'll
8 start with the microphone on my right, your left. Please give your name, and
9 make sure to press the button on top of the mic to turn it on. And you have
10 approximately one minute. Thank you.

11 MS. MAUPIN: Hi. I'm Cardelia Maupin. I just made 40
12 years at the NRC. That means I helped raise this agency. It was less than
13 ten when I came. And the reason I'm speaking today is because, after taking
14 the No Fear Act training that we all just had to do, I realized that there were
15 portions of the Elijah E. Cummings 2021 law that we have not implemented,
16 one of which requires all NRC employees to have EEO training. There is
17 EEO training for managers, but there is not an equivalent EEO training for
18 staff. So I would like to know how we're going to change that.

19 The second thing I learned from taking that training is that
20 the anti-harassment program is supposed to be separate from our human
21 resources program, but that's not the case here at the NRC. We basically
22 have the foxes guarding the henhouse here in direct opposition to the Elijah
23 J. Cummings No Fear Act.

24 And my last question is -- this gets to communications.
25 Without communication, there can be no progress. I didn't realize that we
26 had a whistleblower czar here at the agency. They're supposed to be helping

1 implement the Whistleblower Enhancement Act of 2012. Some people, like
2 myself, who might have a differing professional opinion get really bullied here
3 at this agency when you see your life differently or see things differently than
4 other people see things. And so that goes to communications because
5 without communications there can be no progress.

6 (Applause.)

7 CHAIR HANSON: Cardelia, thank you for your question
8 and thank you for your long service to the agency. I appreciate you. But I
9 am going to punt to Mirela on a lot of those details on this.

10 MS. GAVRILAS: Cardelia, thank you very much. So it's,
11 frankly, I was checking with some of my colleagues in the vicinity, and you put
12 it very bluntly that we need EEO training for all the staff. I think it's a
13 wonderful idea. I checked with Vonna. We're going to do something about
14 it, but give us a few -- I'll commit to two months. By November, you'll hear
15 what we're doing about that. How's that?

16 MS. MAUPIN: Sounds great.

17 MS. GAVRILAS: Thank you.

18 MS. GLENN: Okay. We're going to transition to our next
19 question in the room. Also, feel free, one of the microphones is open, you
20 can make your way for the next question.

21 A quick reminder that I neglected to say earlier. If you see
22 me raise my hand, just know that you are at the one-minute mark, so a friendly
23 reminder for that.

24 With our next question, please, and say your name.

25 MR. TETTER: I'm Keith Tetter, and I'm asking this
26 question on behalf of many staff members that have the same concerns but

1 are concerned about putting themselves out there for fear of retaliation. Part
2 of the reason for our dropping FEVS score is a lack of trust in upper-level
3 management, which you heard earlier, who needs to acknowledge, apologize
4 for, and not repeat their mistakes that they made towards staff. When we
5 were hired as federal employees, we all, at every service level, took the oath
6 of office to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against
7 all enemies, foreign and domestic. In early June, the courts found the COVID
8 vaccine mandate unconstitutional. At the June 2024 NRR all-hands meeting,
9 Chair Hanson, when I asked you a question, basically said that the court's
10 decision doesn't apply to us and the Chair would violate our constitutional
11 rights again just by following orders, which was not an acceptable defense in
12 the George Floyd case and I don't believe it is here.

13 What will the NRC about this constitutional violation in going
14 forward since the agency violated our constitutional rights and their oath of
15 office by blindly following those at different government levels outside the
16 agency rather than exercising the freedom that they have as a supposed
17 independent agency and as people with their own wits.

18 CHAIR HANSON: Well, thanks again for the question. I
19 know this is the second time around on this. I will say, during COVID, all
20 agencies, including this one, were following the guidance and the orders that
21 we had from the rest of the executive branch. The federal workforce was
22 moving as a single unit in this guided by the president's COVID council, and
23 this agency, like all the others, followed the advice and not only the direction
24 but also the advice of experts in the government.

25 MS. GLENN: Thank you for that question. We'll go to our
26 next question in the room.

1 PARTICIPANT: Hello. My name is Isaac. I'm a new
2 employee. Hello. With the ADVANCE --

3 MS. GLENN: Would you come a little bit closer? There
4 you go.

5 PARTICIPANT: With the ADVANCE Act --

6 MS. GLENN: And make sure the microphone is on.

7 PARTICIPANT: Staff may have a change in their work
8 environment and the amount of work that we have trying to improve efficiency.
9 This annual forum, I feel, may not be sufficient. Are there any plans to
10 increase the platform or the amount of opportunities that staff have to provide
11 feedback to senior management?

12 CHAIR HANSON: Well, Isaac, I'm happy to make a public
13 service announcement for Mirela's first town hall on October --

14 MS. GAVRILAS: First week in October.

15 CHAIR HANSON: But also, look, I mean, I think, you know,
16 I have an open-door policy. I think we all do up here. There is an open-door
17 policy as a matter of course for all senior managers in the agency. And so
18 as these things crop up, I mean, the workload issue, I know, is one across
19 multiple fronts of the agency. And folks have the opportunity to avail
20 themselves of opportunities to communicate, as Commissioner Crowell was
21 noting, you know, to communicate about the situation they're facing.

22 I would also just kind of make the remark that I think all of
23 us up here, I think you heard the phrase in various permutations of working
24 smarter, not harder, too. So, obviously, work flow will, you know, it will ebb
25 and flow, as it will, but the goal here isn't just to kind of pile more work on top
26 of people but to focus on the right things.

1 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Certainly, I would add that I
2 hope supervisors, managers, leadership maintain relationships with each and
3 every one of you that encourages you to feel comfortable to bring concerns,
4 whether they're safety concerns or simply work process concerns, office
5 procedures and whatnot, whatever questions you have, that you feel
6 comfortable raising that to the people that you report to and that they will help
7 you resolve whatever it is that you find you need assistance with.

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: If I might add on that. I didn't
9 hear your name.

10 PARTICIPANT: Isaac.

11 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Isaac. Isaac, I'd also
12 entertain not just open doors but, you know, if you've got ideas, suggestions
13 on how to change, you know, we should all be interested in hearing at least
14 those things and consider them as options, right. There's nothing in this
15 world, you know, today is perfect, so we can all get better.

16 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And let me just add a little
17 additional here. Isaac, what part of the agency do you work in?

18 PARTICIPANT: I'm in NRAN.

19 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay. So, you know, part
20 of it is finding efficiencies in your job, talking to your supervisor, managing your
21 workload. There's going to be times when it's just too much. You're being
22 as efficient as possible, and there's just more work than you can get done.
23 And that's where the other half of this or another part of this conundrum comes
24 in, which is how are we looking at our workload in the context of our strategic
25 plan and our strategic hiring initiative and how we're focusing our recruitment
26 and hiring efforts on the places that we have the most acute workload issues

1 or needs. And, hopefully, going forward, we have new OCHCO, we've got
2 new admin sitting in front of us, a new director. They are a big part of helping
3 solve this, as well, as we bring in new talent.

4 MS. GAVRILAS: If I may, I'm going to take just a moment
5 to, again, talk about something that I intend to cover in-depth at the town hall.
6 But to me, it's all about trust. That's why trust came in at number one, and I
7 will make two commitments when it comes to trust. One is transparency.
8 Two is responsiveness.

9 So I am going to start visiting the offices. What I've done
10 throughout my career has been have informal forums, conversations, with
11 people. They're not the substitute for Ask the EDO -- I forget what it's called.
12 But we'll switch it back to Ask the EDO. I find that easier to remember. So
13 it will not be a substitute for that, but it will be, basically, an opportunity to really
14 understand where you're coming from and what's on your mind.

15 The other thing, you know, maybe you don't know me.
16 Maybe you don't have confidence in all your supervisors, but there must be
17 somebody that you have confidence in. Please share and ask them to relay
18 your concerns. So avail yourself -- you know, Commissioner Crowell talks
19 about communication. It behooves all of us to initiate that communication for
20 areas that are important to you. So we'll make sure to have the avenues, the
21 venues to make that happen.

22 Thank you for your question. I mean, it's painful, I think, to
23 all of us to hear such questions coming up from an NRANer, but thanks again.

24 MS. GLENN: Thank you. We'll go to the next question in
25 the room. Please share your name.

26 MR. PALMROSE: Hi. Donald Palmrose. I'm in the

1 Environmental Center of Expertise. And in keeping with the tune or the
2 theme of innovation efficiency, I've got several comments I'd like to provide.

3 First off, I'm not going to mention about all the stuff that's
4 going on in the FRA and the ADVANCE Act, but one of the other interesting
5 things is, about a month ago, the Nuclear Energy Institute submitted a paper
6 to us. It's a very big paper. Hopefully, the Commission, you've seen it. It's
7 all related to basically rapid high-volume deployment of reactors in remote
8 applications and other advanced reactors. And so it's really interesting that,
9 in this paper, the NEI is basically saying that the environmental review is their
10 number-one priority that we need to address. I've never seen that before.

11 So speaking from personal experience, I think the
12 environmental review group has been innovative over the years. We've tried
13 to be that. But the problem is that we're a support organization; and,
14 therefore, we don't have our own funding stream. Our funding stream and
15 resource allocation has to come from the business line, and so you have that
16 competition of where we have innovative ideas that we are bringing forward
17 but now they have to get resourced and now you're competing with now that
18 business line's priorities.

19 Now, with the ADVANCE Act, the FRA, and now this NEI
20 paper, maybe we're going to get more emphasis on that. So I'm going to be
21 a little bit long here, but the important thing is that, when we have to do these
22 things, this innovative stuff, it becomes an extra duty to us because project
23 work is the number-one priority. So I'm hoping going forward with the
24 ADVANCE Act and all the innovative ideas that we're probably going to be
25 putting forward that we get the consideration based on the merits of those and
26 not just the competition between the different business line priorities.

1 Thanks.

2 MS. GLENN: Thank you.

3 CHAIR HANSON: Yes. Thanks, Donald, very much for
4 those comments. And I look forward to hearing more about what's cooking,
5 but I'll just take an opportunity to really express my appreciation for the
6 environmental review group and the incredible work that they've done over the
7 last, just even the period of time that I've been here. And whether that's some
8 of the big generic environmental impact statements we've done on advanced
9 reactors and subsequent license renewal but also the papers that have been
10 sent to the Commission on categorical exclusions. We had an efficiency
11 paper from several years ago, the EA, on the Kairos Hermes 2 reactor, et
12 cetera, as well as the two papers that we have in front of us. Thank you all
13 very, very much for all of your work and your creativity and your dedication.

14 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So I agree with what the
15 Chairman said, and I do think there have been innovations that have taken
16 place in that office within the constraints provided by NEPA. So I think, in
17 reflection of actions that Congress has taken over the last year and OGC's
18 interpretation of those, obviously, the Commission, I think, needs to engage
19 on those papers going forward.

20 Environmental reviews are a significant part of licensing
21 decisions that this agency makes, and this is one of those areas, I think, that
22 we need to look harder at in terms of the level of priority that is given to those
23 reviews. We need to be functioning in that office as efficiently as we can to
24 support timely decision-making. That is what is expected of us by Congress,
25 so that means it should have a high priority, it should be resourced
26 appropriately, it should be staffed appropriately. Training needs to be

1 available to make sure that we have enough qualified people to do that work.
2 That workload has changed for a variety of reasons over the last several
3 years, and it will fluctuate going forward. But we need to be very aware of
4 the nature of that workload, not just to be as efficient as we can in those
5 individual decisions or even as a division within this agency but in recognition
6 that that workload is going to fluctuate and we need to be able to wrestle with
7 that as we go forward.

8 So I think it's a real testament to the office that the work that
9 has been done over the last several years has been done as well as it has
10 because I think we've seen what I would probably consider a shortage of staff
11 in that area. So I hear your concerns. It's something that's concerned me
12 for a while because I think, when it comes to making choices between high
13 priorities and low-activity work or low-priority work, this is something I would
14 put in that high-priority bin as a very high priority that management and
15 leadership should be focused on.

16 So thank you for your comments and for all your efforts and
17 those of your colleagues.

18 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: It's a great question and
19 comment, so thank you for doing it. You know, I don't know if I want to say
20 it's a concern, but it's certainly very notable when our environmental reviews
21 are taking longer than our safety evaluations and reviews and not because
22 the environmental review is, you know, I don't know the exact reason always,
23 but I don't think it's because the environmental review, you guys are lazy or
24 slow. It's just because the amount of requirements you have there take a lot
25 of time and outweigh some of the other requirements we have.

26 We are making progress, as my colleagues have identified,

1 the GEIS and things like that. But there's also Fiscal Responsibility Act and
2 other guidance from the White House on a NEPA reform that's coming out,
3 and I don't need to put Brooke or GC, on the spot, but they're going to help us
4 implement those things not only to abide by the law but, hopefully, with an eye
5 towards efficiency in doing so and deciding what things coming from the FRA
6 or the White House are most applicable to our agency mission and how best
7 to implement them. And, Brooke, you're welcome to add if you want, but
8 that's something to look forward to. Hopefully, that will help re-balance the
9 equation.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I'm going to take a minute to
11 just add one more thing, and this is just an opinion I formed over the career.
12 You know, there may be room for efficiencies here and room for innovations
13 and new laws, like Commissioner Crowell mentioned, that we're going to be
14 operating in that change the constraints that we're operating within. But by
15 and large, I think the agency should be fairly proud of its track record of
16 environmental reviews because I think, to a certain extent, you know, they
17 may not be executed as timely as the industry would like to see, but I think, in
18 many ways, compared to other environmental reviews elsewhere in the
19 federal government, there's a demonstrated track record here that, you know,
20 with some exceptions, I think definitely warrants being proud of. I think we've
21 had some recent challenges and curveballs over the last few years, but I think,
22 over the long-term, there's a record there of high-caliber work.

23 So I think the need will be to make these decisions more
24 efficient going forward, but I think we should not ignore the caliber of work
25 that's been done in the past.

26 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Donald, thank you so much

1 for your comments. And I have nothing to add over what my colleagues have
2 said, except for three words: ditto, ditto, ditto.

3 MS. GLENN: Thank you for those dittos. We will
4 transition to the next question in the room, please. Share your name.

5 MR. BARTLETT: My name is Matt Bartlett. I'm project
6 manager in fuel cycle. So I appreciate the discussion about the comments
7 on the ADVANCE Act and efficiency, and I guess my question is: is there a
8 recognition that efficiency doesn't necessarily mean faster? And the reason
9 I ask that question is, in fuel cycle and I'm sure other parts of the agency, we
10 have guidance that actually gives us a safe and efficient fast way to provide
11 information to the NRC for the applicants that will give us an efficient quick
12 review because it's being done in a way that's been looked at before. I know
13 there's a lot of discussion about we're going to do things new, you know, a
14 new way, we have to be open to new processes, and a lot of times we see, in
15 fuel cycle at least, facilities submitting applications that don't follow the
16 guidance and they want to follow a new way. To be efficient, since our focus
17 is on safety, we're going to review those in-depth and make sure that they're
18 safe because they haven't received the same analysis that the guidance, the
19 way in the guidance provides.

20 So I just want to ask is there recognition that efficiency may
21 actually be an efficient review of something that's new may actually take
22 longer than something that's not new? So is there recognition that efficiency
23 doesn't necessarily mean faster?

24 CHAIR HANSON: It's a good question, and I know, in
25 certain cases where we are getting new information and people are proposing
26 new methodologies and alternative ways to meet our regulations, we do have

1 to take some extra time, right, to kind of understand and make sure,
2 understand those methodologies, do the confirmatory analysis that's often
3 necessary. And then when we do that, though, the efficiency may come
4 down the road where somebody goes to build the next one, and we don't have
5 to look at it de novo and where we can say, oh, okay, this thing is only a little
6 bit different than the one that we did before, so we're just going to kind of look
7 at those differences. And I think we did that on Hermes 2, and I think we're
8 doing it in some other areas, as well. But, again, we're relying on what we
9 know, and we're relying on that body of information.

10 And so I think, oftentimes, that focus on, if we're focusing on
11 the most safety-significant things, it will often but maybe not always yield, you
12 know, maybe less time, maybe fewer schedules. So I think a lot of this is
13 going to be case dependent, and I'm willing to accept, too, that there are
14 places in the agency where we really are already doing those things. And so
15 it's not necessarily a one-size-fits-all. I welcome my colleagues' comments
16 on this.

17 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I think one of the challenges
18 is, particularly in that office, is there's such a variety of facilities. It makes it
19 more challenging. Certainly, efficiency should not foreclose innovation and
20 safety first, but we have to be in line with our principles. And the regulatory
21 activity needs to be consistent with the risk reduction that's achieved, and
22 regulation shouldn't be unjustifiably in the state of transition, which I think
23 sometimes gets into decision-making and how staff are interpreting
24 requirements and sometimes precedent.

25 I think the one thing that often gives me pause is we need
26 to have a review pattern that shows our lessons learned actually yield

1 efficiency, that the first time we review something it takes a certain amount of
2 time. The second time we see that should take less time because we should
3 be able to learn from and apply the decisions that have been made prior, and
4 we should be consistent about that because the temptation, I think, to
5 sometimes revisit previous decisions, we're going to do that at the expense of
6 efficiency. There may be a need for that in certain safety-significant
7 situations, but we shouldn't begin every new review as an opportunity to
8 perhaps review or reconsider or reevaluate work done by a colleague. Once
9 a decision has been made, we need to ensure that our decisions are reliable
10 because other companies, other applicants are going to look at those
11 decisions and say this is what was necessary to meet this requirement, this is
12 what I'm going to put in my application. They will end up standardizing their
13 applications based on the decisions that we make, and we need to hold to that
14 because, in the end, that will lead to better quality applications and a more
15 streamlined review on our part in line with what the Chairman said.

16 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'm going to add here
17 quickly. You know, Matt, you raised a good point that I think we've forgot to
18 lean into enough in discussion of efficiency thus far, which is efficiency is, in
19 some respects, it's very much an internal thing that we can manage, but a
20 whole other chunk of efficiency rests on the applicant and the licensee and
21 whether they decide to do constructive pre-application engagement, the
22 quality of their actual application, subsequent submissions, you know,
23 responding to reasonable requests for additional information. You know, the
24 applicant can control their destiny at some level on efficiency and speed by
25 the quality of the work that they do. So I just want to recognize that we
26 recognize it's not all within your control, but what we can control we need to

1 control. And as was said here, you know, knowledge management is a big
2 part of that. Taking lessons learned that can be applied to the next time.

3 If everything we get before us going forward is novel,
4 nothing is going to move quickly. So, hopefully, industry doesn't take that
5 approach. But where there are similarities, we need to recognize those and
6 avail ourselves of the inherent efficiencies there.

7 But, you know, if you're a new employee and it's not passed
8 along to you from people who have been around here longer what was done
9 before that you don't need to recreate, then we're going to not move as fast
10 as we can. So knowledge management and transfer is a big part of it.

11 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Going last is so much fun.
12 So, Matt, thank you for that. And I recognize your concern, and I agree with
13 it. The points that were made here are important because efficiency, we're
14 being asked to be more efficient and to be, you know, to change. It doesn't
15 mean the licensees and applicants are going to do that themselves, although
16 they're looking for flexibility in our regs and the way we do things and our
17 processes, and we're looking for them to be, in the end, very reliable in what
18 they provide us.

19 So the information, the robust application, the early
20 engagement, all that stuff matters on the front end, which will get us there.
21 New and novel doesn't necessarily mean it's going to take longer. It could
22 get done quicker. We don't know until we get it in front of us. But as long as
23 our processes are in place to look at things in an effective way and trying to
24 meet that, you know, meet that mandate that we've been given, you know,
25 maybe we get it done in the time, maybe not. They're not all the same.

26 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I'm going to add just one last

1 point to that. There is every incentive for applicants to provide us exactly
2 what we need to make decisions because they are looking for an efficient
3 review. So they will try to make it easy for staff to find what they need and
4 have what they need to reach a decision. If they are struggling with a
5 particular point in our regulations, it will be for a good reason, and so I think
6 we just need to recognize that if there is a challenging discussion or, you know,
7 a disagreement or a challenging over a particular opinion, that probably needs
8 to be escalated and considered a little more thoroughly because they are not
9 going to make these reviews difficult on purpose because that is not in their
10 interest. They're going to want to make sure that you have everything you
11 need to make your decisions. So I just want to make that point.

12 MS. GLENN: Thank you. We'll go to the next question in
13 the room. Please share your name.

14 MR. STAPLES: Necota Staples, currently serving as the
15 rotating PM for NRAN and regularly work as an RTR inspector in DANU.

16 I'm going to be efficient with this. Three different questions,
17 three different topics, but all very similar. The first one is going to be along
18 the lines of the FEVS scores. When these scores came out, I took a look at
19 what the top-five performing agencies were and what they scored high in.
20 Along those lines, each one scored very high in DEI. I would like to know
21 what you all would like to do or aim to do in taking a look at those scores with
22 those agencies and figuring out how that could apply to us.

23 The next thing: recruitment. I am preparing to go down to
24 North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, an HBCU that
25 produces the most amount of engineers in the country, black engineers in the
26 country. I've noticed that, within the program of an agency, we do not have

1 a program that goes beyond just recruiting for volunteers. Is there something
2 that we can take a look at and say we want to have a business line that helps
3 to teach us how to go out and do recruiting and to be a little bit more serious?

4 And then the final one: retention. We're being picked off,
5 and I agree with Commissioner Caputo that we have a very large talent pool.
6 What are we going to do because what I've seen is people are paying us or
7 the people who are picking us off are paying more than what we have coming
8 in from the agency and those places also have a lot more incentives, work-life
9 balance programs that exceed what we have within our agency. Is there
10 anything that we can do within our agency to have better policies there?
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Necota, for all that. Let's see.
13 I'll try and maybe tackle a couple of these, and other folks can kind of jump in.

14 I think the first one was about FEVS and DEI. Look, I think
15 that the DEI programs that we have, the advisory groups, the employee
16 resource groups, et cetera, I think are really critical to the agency, and I think
17 it's a way to build trust. And I know a lot of us do the lunchtime events that
18 we have, as well as, you know, making an effort to meet with those groups.
19 And, for me at least, the question is always, okay, well, what can I do, what
20 can I do from my standpoint, from my office, to help, to encourage, to highlight,
21 to profile the importance of this? You know, in my view, the DEI stuff is really
22 critical to safety culture and the safety culture that we have in the agency and
23 including all of the voices that we have.

24 On recruitment, I think there's a lot of good things going on.
25 University Champions, I'm looking at Jennifer, I think there's more that we can
26 do there. I think a number of us have been out to universities of all kinds of

1 stripes. Thanks for going to NCA&T and establishing those relationship and
2 establishing that pipeline for that diverse workforce. I think the agency has
3 an affirmative interest in building that diverse workforce and developing the
4 pipelines and the relationships to these really strong engineering schools at
5 all kinds of institutions. But I certainly recognize the importance of HBCUs to
6 this agency and the history.

7 And then I think it was tools. I guess I'll reiterate my
8 expectation for OCHCO and others in the agency that we're using all the tools
9 at our disposal. But one of the big things that I certainly -- I'll just speak for
10 myself. One of the big things that I sell is it's public service. This is the only
11 place that people can do that and go to work for their fellow Americans every
12 day and, you know, protect people and the environment to promote the
13 common defense and security, et cetera. And the importance of that and the
14 uniqueness of that I think is really important. And so it's one of the things I'm
15 most proud of, and so that's the thing I talk about when I go out in the world.

16 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: It's sad to have to say this,
17 but the salaries that we have within the federal government are not going to
18 compete with the private sector. And, you know, we will use the tools and
19 incentives that are within our power, but that salary question is part of the
20 larger federal government, and it does make it tough for us to compete. But
21 like the Chairman said, what we offer is our mission and I think that's a draw
22 for the caliber of employee that is so important for this agency. People come
23 here for the mission. They don't come here for the money.

24 But we also have the benefit that you don't see in the private
25 sector, and that is job security. And I think that is a benefit, and that is
26 something that sometimes people prize over a higher salary. But I think those

1 two things are assets that allow us to draw in people that are dedicated and
2 committed to the mission and dedicated to staying with us and developing that
3 expertise.

4 On the DEI issue, I just want to say I know a lot of you are
5 aware that I have sort of, I have tried to embrace issues facing women in the
6 work force. And just based on experiences that I've had but also experiences
7 that have been relayed to me by other women in the workforce, I want to state
8 that a lot of the concerns that come to me, a lot of the things that I've heard
9 aren't unique to women. They can apply to anyone, any minority, or people
10 that are simply shy in a work environment.

11 So what I have tried to do is work with some of our affinity
12 groups to help develop strategies, to give women and others more confidence
13 in operating in a meeting environment and finding ways to contribute, but also,
14 most recently, finding ways to develop their career. And the NTWN event,
15 putting pen to paper on a career development plan is a step in that direction,
16 and it was not an event limited to women. But I think these are ways that we
17 can help folks develop their own skills, their own career path, help them
18 develop their careers, and become even brighter assets to the agency.

19 So that's just one step that I have taken, and I thank
20 everyone who has supported those efforts, everyone who has participated in
21 those efforts. And if you haven't participated in those efforts, I encourage you
22 to join going forward.

23 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'm going to speak just to
24 recruitment because you said something that I've been thinking a lot about in
25 the run-up to today's all-hands meeting. You know, we have a variety of, you
26 know, early career opportunities and university programs. Summer hires,

1 NRAN, University Champions, the University Leadership Program. Now,
2 with the ADVANCE Act, we'll have a trainee program which will hopefully build
3 a bridge between where we're giving grants to universities and where we're
4 hopefully being able to recruit and bring in new hires.

5 But what I noticed in looking at all these programs, and I'm
6 probably missing some of them, is that some of them have a permanent
7 program manager that run the program and others kind of are done on the
8 goodwill of someone in addition to their day job, you know, or it's not a full-
9 time part of their job. And I think our workforce issues are important enough
10 and our retention issues, our recruitment issues, are acute enough that we
11 really need to have program managers dedicated to each of these programs,
12 to each of these early career programs. And if the program manager is based
13 in OCHCO, then they need to have a close relationship with the programs that
14 are going to use those employees. And if the program manager is based
15 somewhere else, in a business line for instance, that they have a very close
16 relationship with OCHCO to make sure that those processes are moving
17 quickly and appropriately.

18 I take your point on HBCUs. I also say if you look at all
19 these university programs that we have between the leadership program and
20 summer hires, NRAN, University Champions, if you looked at where all those
21 participants come from and you plot them on a map, you'll notice that we're
22 missing half the country. I mean, west of the Rockies is pretty sparse in terms
23 of where we're pulling people from or engaging folks, and that's a real huge
24 missed opportunity. So I think we need some geographic diversity, in
25 addition to some other diversity. So that's all. Thanks.

26 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: If I might real quick, you

1 know, we're all the same but we're all different, you know. I was raised in the
2 south. I was taught about compassion and about respect. I was taught by
3 my mom and dad to empower people to be successful in everything that I did
4 because, if I did so, naturally, success followed me, and I really didn't have to
5 struggle for it. So to me, the DEI issue is all about respect, you know. Your
6 background makes you who you are. It doesn't make you better than me, it
7 doesn't make my background make me any better than you are. We're the
8 same, and we need to respect and trust each other. And if we have
9 compassion, then everything seems to work for good.

10 And we do more at this agency, I think, than most in the
11 federal government in that area, too. And I'm very proud that we do that.

12 Just down the road from my home is South Carolina State
13 University. It is an HBCU, and I was there the day they reinstated the nuclear
14 engineering program at that university. So I know we make good engineers,
15 and they can come from anywhere and I encourage that because we need to
16 engineers right now. We need a lot of things, not just us but it's around the
17 globe.

18 And I agree with Commissioner Caputo about the people
19 who come here. It's a niche agency. It's a niche mission. And the people
20 who come here come because they're passionate about safety and security
21 issues, and it's a great place to work and build a career at. It doesn't pay like
22 the private sector does, but the people who come here, you know why you're
23 here. I've not met person here who is not passionate about their work, and
24 I'm grateful for that as a Commissioner. So thank you.

25 MS. GLENN: All right. Thank you. I'm going to do a
26 quick time check. It is 11:41, so we have approximately time for one more

1 question. I don't see anyone at the mic, so I'm going to give that question
2 over to one of our pre-submitted questions. Ginger, if you would share,
3 please.

4 MS. WHITE: Okay. This question has a little bit of a
5 background in it. The way outside stakeholders treat NRC staff is a factor in
6 staff morale and workload, but it is often ignored. This has turned out to be
7 a major issue with respect to advanced reactors where some company
8 representatives and lobbying organizations have been downright abusive to
9 agency workers. What's worse, senior management is perceived as taking
10 the side of the outside stakeholders and leaving the NRC project teams to take
11 the brunt of the criticism. This is both demoralizing and time consuming for
12 project staff. What can be done to limit repeated and unproductive industry
13 interactions with project staff so that they can focus on doing the projects,
14 rather than on handling difficult people of all the things that could help NRC
15 meet tighter schedules?

16 CHAIR HANSON: So thank you for the question. I wasn't
17 aware that this was an issue, so I appreciate the question just in kind of raising
18 the awareness to me. I think, like a lot of my colleagues, I meet with senior
19 leadership in these organizations. And so if this is happening at the staff
20 level, I would appreciate knowing about it because then I can have that
21 conversation with CEOs and CNOs.

22 I think this is important, and, again, I want to emphasize the
23 importance, again, of our staff having confidence, confidence in our abilities
24 and our technical abilities and our conclusions here in our interactions with
25 licensees or applicants or potential applicants or what have you. And with
26 that, I want to hand this over to Mirela for just a second.

1 MS. GAVRILAS: Yes. So one of the themes that I want
2 to talk to everybody about is civility, and I will tell you I have zero tolerance for
3 abuse of any sort. And, please, all you need to do is just let me know.
4 Eventually, you all have my phone number. Half of you already have it. But
5 if something like that happens, like the Chair said, we all have contacts in
6 those organizations, and it will not be tolerated. Thanks for sharing with us.

7 MS. GLENN: Okay. Thank you. At this time, that will
8 end our question-and-answer segment, so kudos to everyone. Great job for
9 your engagement today.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. GLENN: And thank you to our Commissioners and
12 Mirela for helping to answer questions. And with that, I'm going to hand it
13 back over to Chair Hanson.

14 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Patricia, very, very much.
15 And I think we have a few minutes here at the end to hear from Sheryl Sanchez
16 from NTEU. Sheryl, the floor is yours.

17 MS. SANCHEZ: Good morning. I want to say right up-
18 front I'm going to get through my comments as quickly as possible, and I would
19 like to then give about two - three minutes to Dale Yeilding, who is the second
20 full-time union person, just so you know as soon as I say thank you don't all
21 get up and leave.

22 So good morning, Chair Hanson, Commissioners, senior
23 managers, and, most importantly, bargaining unit employees. I am Sheryl
24 Sanchez, president of NTEU Chapter 208, and I'm pleased to provide the
25 union's remarks this morning. NTEU Chapter 208 is the exclusive
26 representative of bargaining units at the NRC. I'm joined here in the room

1 and virtually by many NTEU union leaders who work hard every day for
2 bargaining unit employees, such as our stewards, labor partners, and elected
3 officers.

4 Without such a dedicated team, NTEU would not be able to work together to
5 strive to ensure that every NRC employee is treated with dignity and respect.

6 Since we met last year, NRC has been busier than ever
7 fighting to preserve and improve the working conditions for our almost 1900
8 bargaining unit employees. We are partnering, bargaining, filing grievances,
9 and evoking arbitrations. We are fighting for individual employees, subsets
10 of the bargaining unit, and the entire bargaining unit.

11 I am so grateful to all of our Chapter 208 team members
12 who work on your behalf every day. We know our employees put their faith
13 in NTEU, and we will continue to work tirelessly to support and protect you.

14 Last year, I spent a lot of time discussing the proposed
15 flexible work model, which was disapproved by the Commission in late
16 October of 2023. I explained why the flexible work model is a particularly
17 good model for the NRC because it embraces the five principles of risk-
18 informed decision-making. First, it is consistent with all federal laws,
19 regulations, and negotiated agreements about telework. Second, there's
20 depth by having both employee and supervisor understand day-to-day work
21 needs to determine when an office presence is beneficial. Third, it provides
22 managers with the authority they need to ensure that employees are where
23 they need to be when they need to be there to get our work done. Fourth, it
24 recognizes that data to date shows that the risk of embracing telework is very
25 small while the risk of not embracing it is large due to the negative impact on
26 employee retention, morale, hiring, and agency culture. Finally, it monitors

1 agency performance using the same metrics we've been using for years to
2 ensure that we continue to be an effective and efficient regulator.

3 In last year's comments, I explained to the Commission the
4 importance of implementing the flexible work model. NTEU and properly-
5 delegated agency managers negotiated it, and OPM gave its blessing.
6 NTEU filed a grievance following the disapproval of the flexible work model,
7 which the union is litigating, as Dale Yeilding will finally get in front of an
8 arbitrator in early December of 2024.

9 A positive outcome will not solve all of our telework problems, but it will go a
10 long way in kicking many of the approvals down to the lowest level.

11 I am troubled by the disparity of approval of telework
12 schedules not congruent with the agency policy. And employees who want
13 more telework or desire full-time or remote telework, request what you want
14 and let NTEU represent you if your request is not approved. We are winning
15 individual cases. It is a slow process, but we will not give up until telework
16 approvals are fair and transparent and everyone acknowledges that telework
17 is work.

18 We continue to partner and bargain on your behalf in
19 matters such as expanding hoteling and future workplace renovations and
20 office moves. Since we are at various levels of agreement or disagreement,
21 I will not spend time on individual cases, but I will say that we will communicate
22 with the bargaining unit as these matters unfold.

23 Having said this, anyone who would like to discuss
24 individual situations, please reach out to us and we will be happy to have a
25 conversation.

26 As I've said in the past, when we get new information and

1 new data, we use it to do better for you. As an example, when we were
2 bargaining the renovation of the 11th and 13th floors of One White Flint, we
3 had a poll that was participated in by over 700 employees after the sixth floor
4 renovation that indicated that 95 percent of employees preferred a more
5 traditional work place. By the time we got to bargaining the renovation of the
6 10th floor of One White Flint, we had a lot more data to support our position.

7 For example, recent NRR office selections in One White
8 Flint demonstrate that employees significantly prefer un-renovated floors 7
9 through 10 as compared to the renovated floor 6. Office size and privacy
10 apparently explain the preference, and our office selection results reinforce
11 findings from past NTEU surveys. Additionally, to counter the agency
12 request to increase common interaction space, an NTEU member performed
13 a Monte Carlo analysis to assess existing conference room usage at the NRC
14 headquarters, which shows existing capacity significantly exceeds
15 requirements.

16 More data. Recently, the NRC confirmed that the
17 occupancy of One White Flint and Two White Flint is at the Montgomery
18 County capacity limit. Thus, any agency proposal to densify is without basis
19 and would violate the county limit.

20 As I stated in last year's comments, a 2021 FEVS ranking
21 of 25 mid-sized federal agencies was the first time ever that we fell below the
22 median in the bottom 20 percent. In 2022, we ranked 21 of 27, which is a
23 slight improvement, keeping us below the median and in the bottom 22
24 percent.

25 I'm extremely discouraged to report that, in 2023, we were
26 ranked 23 of 26, which is the bottom 12 percent. Some important underlying

1 causes have persisted, such as employees wondering if the agency has staff
2 interest at heart and lack of evidence-based decisions. The agency has a
3 morale, as well as an attrition problem. I'd like to know what the Commission
4 thinks about our plummeting employee morale and surging attrition and what
5 they're going to do about it.

6 I'm happy to say that our current union membership has
7 been increasing quite a bit since late last year and continues to increase
8 weekly. Thank you to all of our new members. Let's keep the trend going.
9 There is strength in numbers. The stronger we are, the more we can gain
10 better working conditions or at least not lose any of the union-won benefits we
11 already have.

12 A recent example of our strength was how swiftly we were
13 able to thwart an attempt by the agency to unilaterally change the way staff
14 are evaluated by sending direction to office directors and regional
15 administrators to shorten the typical one-page performance evaluation write-
16 up to no more than 1,000 characters for each element. Our members
17 immediately recognized that they were uncomfortable with this change, as
18 many reached out to NTEU to express their discomfort. We reached out to
19 the agency indicating the action violated our contractual rights, and we were
20 pleased that the agency almost immediately reversed the change, returning
21 to the status quo. Please reach out to NTEU if your supervisor significantly
22 reduces the length of your performance appraisal this year compared to last
23 year.

24 Since many of these new members have been at the agency
25 for some time but just recently become dues-paying members, I decided to
26 reach out to a few dozen and ask the reason for the recent membership. In

1 many cases, the answers were individual and all over the board, but I did find
2 two somewhat recurring themes. The first was, and I don't know who they
3 mean, but the agency is just getting meaner. And the second is the
4 employees do not feel valued. Whether these things are true or not is not as
5 troubling as the fact that employees feel they are. One employee said that
6 he is just a box of pens, a commodity which could easily be discarded or
7 replaced. It's distressing that some of our employees who are among the
8 best employees in the federal government feel this way, whether it's true or
9 not.

10 Another common complaint that NTEU receives is that
11 employees do not feel heard by upper management and that upper
12 management is not willing to answer their difficult questions. In several
13 meetings lately that were scheduled for the purpose of asking questions of
14 upper management in individual offices, employees reached out to the union
15 afterward to complain that upper management appeared to slow walk through
16 the pre-submitted questions, which they had time to prepare answers to prior
17 to the meeting, and that more than one manager answered the exact same
18 question. This led very little time to answer difficult ad hoc questions at the
19 end of the meeting before running out of time. Again, it is less important if
20 this is true or not than the fact that employees feel it is.

21 From where I sit, approximately three-quarters of the
22 agency is in the bargaining unit. The agency literally cannot regulate or meet
23 our mission without our bargaining unit employees, so it's simply a good
24 business decision to make our employees feel valued and wanted. Many
25 employees have reached out to us with questions and concerns about the
26 ADVANCE Act. Let me assure you that, the day after it was passed, our

1 NTEU attorneys were reviewing it.

2 Even before the ADVANCE Act, the Commission directed
3 the staff to be the risk-informed regulatory they believed we should be, to
4 make decisions in a timely manner and to be willing to move forward in the
5 face of uncertainty. Our attorneys have indicated that some provisions of the
6 ADVANCE Act are negotiable and some are not. As such, we asked the
7 agency for a briefing to prepare for potential bargaining, but they refused.
8 NTEU will, however, vigorously pursue all the negotiable aspects of the
9 ADVANCE Act. We will continue to monitor the implementation since, as you
10 well know, in general, people react better when dealing with topics such as
11 direct hire authority, hiring and performance bonuses, increased pay for
12 certain positions, a nuclear energy traineeship, as well as a strong direction to
13 work more efficiently. NTEU is not surprised that our employees have some
14 serious concerns.

15 We're here for you as the agency faces this upcoming
16 challenge. Please show the agency your support for your union during these
17 busy and challenging times. You need us now more than ever. Please take
18 care of yourselves and your co-workers, practice empathy, be kind to each
19 other, and be kind to yourselves. Thank you for your attention.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. YEILDING: Thank you, Sheryl. I'll be brief. I've just
22 been told we're just about out of time. I just marked down three or four areas
23 that I still want to touch base on real quick.

24 Change. We've heard change so much throughout this
25 whole meeting, and people may not understand where the union gets involved
26 in change and the difference between workplace conditions, conditions of

1 employment is an overused term, and mission-related aspects. Well, the
2 union does not get involved in any mission-related decisions, so you look at
3 the ADVANCE Act and you determine what efficiencies are changed and what
4 things are implemented as a result of that. And, basically, the union wouldn't
5 be involved in mission-related aspects, but changes to conditions of
6 employment, efficiency, and methods and means of performing work the union
7 may be involved in, so we'll probably have to see what some of the agency's
8 proposals are for change before we actually determine the negotiability and
9 get down to the bargaining table on that.

10 Briefly, on the FEVS results, we hear the declining all the
11 time and where can the union get involved. Sheryl has brought me back
12 onboard for the past two years and I've been bringing issues to the Agency
13 Labor Management Partnership Committee. Well, what issues do I bring?
14 Well, we don't bring things traditionally on grievances, on former negotiations,
15 individual employee concerns. We typically bring issues to the ALMPC that
16 are improvement to the agency and the work-life balance of employees, and I
17 haven't been reporting those to employees over the past two years basically
18 because we haven't been successful at any of the issues that we've brought
19 to that committee. We've been tracking them and keeping an account of
20 them, and it's up to 100 now, and we recently had to report the efficiency of
21 this committee to OPM. And I think what we're going to do now is we're going
22 to start sharing these issues with staff through union announcements so we
23 can see the improvements that can be done if the agency takes action on
24 these many improvements to the agency that don't cross the threshold of a
25 grievance violation or cross the threshold of meeting formal negotiations
26 because we have another forum for that.

1 One of those related to direct hire authority, and we know
2 that's in the ADVANCE Act. And if the agency uses direct hire authority to
3 circumvent giving existing employees promotions, that's going to be forefront
4 to the union's attention.

5 And one other aspect, we've been talking about efficiency
6 and effectiveness. It's actually defined in Management Directive 10.38,
7 which is position management. And so when we look at branch chiefs and
8 second-level supervisors managing positions, we talk about the position
9 description, what employees do, what's your grade level, what your grade
10 controlling duties are. That may be a way efficiency can be effectively
11 implemented, especially since that's the management directive that defines it.

12 Last but not least is election coming up. I can't violate the
13 Hatch Act and tell you who to vote for, but just be aware that it is very important
14 this upcoming election. I'm sure it's going to affect federal employees one
15 way or the other, so please get out and vote. And Sheryl is looking for
16 appointment of some new stewards, so, if anybody is interested in
17 participating in steward activities and supporting your union, besides just
18 becoming a dues-paying member, we welcome that.

19 So thank you very much and join NTEU.

20 (Applause.)

21 CHAIR HANSON: Okay. Thank you to our NTEU
22 representatives. Thank you all for being here. Thank you, Mirela and SECY
23 and Admin and CIO for making all of this work today. Thanks to Patricia for
24 moderating, Ginger for reading, and really for all of the engagement and
25 participation. Thanks to my colleagues for your thoughtful responses and our
26 shared leadership of the agency.

1 Mirela, I will give you the final word.

2 MS. GAVRILAS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you,
3 Commissioners. Thank you everybody who joined us in the room and
4 virtually. Have a great day. Bye.

5 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record
6 at 12:00 p.m.)

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