

UNITED STATES

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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

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THURSDAY,

DECEMBER 5, 2024

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The Commission met in the Commissioners' Hearing Room,  
at 10:00 a.m. EST, 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, Acting Secretary of the Commission

BROOKE CLARK, General Counsel

NRC STAFF:

MIRELA GAVRILAS, Executive Director for Operations

ERIN CARFANG, Branch Chief, Region I

VONNA ORDAZ, Director, Office of Small Business &  
Civil Rights (SBCR)

HAROLD PITTMAN, Director, Office of Public Affairs

RICHARD REVZAN, Associate Director for Human  
Resources Operations and Policy, Office of the  
Chief Human Capital Officer

SHERYL SANCHEZ, representing National Treasury  
Employees Union, Chapter 208

JILL SHEPHERD, Secretary, Native American Advisory  
Committee

TUWANDA SMITH, Affirmative Employment and Diversity  
Management Program Manager, SBCR

## PROCEEDINGS

10:00 a.m.

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3 CHAIR HANSON: Good morning, everyone. I convene  
4 the Commission's public meeting on Equal Employment Opportunity,  
5 Affirmative Employment, and Small Business. Twice a year, we meet to get  
6 an update on the progress and opportunities related to equal employment  
7 opportunity, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, and the NRC's Small  
8 Business Program. Our last meeting was in June of this year.

9 Today, we're going to discuss topics that are very important  
10 to ensuring the NRC employees have a safe and inclusive working  
11 environment where they can pursue their career goals and help the Agency  
12 fulfill its mission. With that, I'll ask my colleagues if they have any remarks  
13 they would like to make.

14 No? Okay. Thank you. Good morning.

15 I will hand it over to our Executive Director for Operations,  
16 Mirela Gavrilas.

17 MS. GAVRILAS: Good morning, Chair. Good morning,  
18 Commissioners. So today's meeting will focus largely on diversity, equity,  
19 inclusion, and accessibility. These topics are important for two reasons.  
20 First, our decisions improve when we consider a variety of views and  
21 perspectives. Second, our ability to relate to a broad range of external  
22 stakeholders, as well as with each other, is bolstered by our own diversity.

23 Before we get into the staff presentation, I want to mention  
24 that OPM has just released governmentwide statistics from the most recent

1 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Within the last year, in the area of  
2 DEIA, we continued to be above the government average and we just got  
3 slightly above our peers in mid-sized agencies, which is a modest  
4 improvement, but something that we hold dear.

5 And with that, I'm going to pass the microphone to Vonna.

6 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you, Mirela. And good morning,  
7 Chair Hanson and Commissioners, and NRC colleagues. I'm Vonna Ordaz,  
8 Director for the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights. My pronouns are  
9 she and her.

10 And for this briefing, we have chosen a quilt theme. This is  
11 to highlight the integral role diversity and collaboration play in achieving  
12 agencywide goals. In simple terms, we are better together -- stronger than  
13 the sum of our individual parts and we work in unison across technical,  
14 corporate, and legal offices to achieve the larger Agency mission. Through  
15 this collaborative approach, we leverage the power of diversity in all its forms  
16 to foster innovation, expand our influence, enhance our expertise, and inform  
17 our strategic decisionmaking.

18 Next slide, please. I am pleased to be here today with my  
19 co-presenters. We have Tuwanda Smith, Affirmative Employment and  
20 Diversity Management Program Manager from SBCR; Rich Revzan, the  
21 Associate Director for the Division of Human Resources Operations and  
22 Policy, Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer; Hal Pittman, the Director for  
23 the Office of Public Affairs; Erin Carfang, the Branch Chief in Region I; and Jill  
24 Shepherd, the Secretary of the Native American Advisory Committee.

1                   Today, we will provide you with an update on our work areas  
2 in the areas of equal employment opportunity, affirmative employment, and  
3 small business.

4                   Next slide, please. The Office of Small Business and Civil  
5 Rights consists of four program areas which provide essential support across  
6 the Agency as we work in tandem to achieve the NRC's mission and strategic  
7 goals. Our vision is simple, yet powerful: fostering equal opportunity on an  
8 equitable basis for empowered engagement. It serves as our compass as  
9 we strive to meet our office mission, which cannot be achieved without robust  
10 partnership and collaboration across the Agency. It takes all of us working  
11 together to make sustained progress and maximize the Agency's potential in  
12 the key program areas.

13                   The Small Business Program plays a crucial role in  
14 maximizing opportunities for small businesses and the Agency. It helps  
15 these businesses navigate the federal procurement process by providing  
16 resources and support essential to successfully competing for prime and  
17 subcontract opportunities. At the same time, the Small Business Program  
18 helps the Agency efficiently and economically meet its procurement needs by  
19 assisting offices in making informed buying decisions.

20                   The Civil Rights Program is committed to upholding federal  
21 laws and requirements to eradicate and prevent discriminatory employment  
22 practices. Its work is centered on creating equal opportunities in hiring,  
23 promotions, training, and other employment activities, fostering a diverse,  
24 equitable, and inclusive workforce reflective of our larger society. This is

1 essential to creating a workplace that reflects NRC's ideal culture.

2           The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Outreach Program  
3 serves the Agency community through fostering the notion of inclusivity by  
4 delivering interactive engagements that highlight the various facets that make  
5 us unique and those that unite us. The program is dedicated to promoting a  
6 culture of civility, respect, and opportunity by working to ensure that every  
7 individual, regardless of background or identity, has the chance to contribute  
8 and thrive in a supportive and accessible environment.

9           The Affirmative Employment and Diversity Management  
10 Program helps the Agency pursue actions to eradicate employment  
11 discrimination, eliminate prejudice, improve diversity in the workplace, and  
12 create an environment where NRC employees are valued, respected, and free  
13 to develop and perform at their fullest potential. Programmatic efforts and  
14 activities center on fully realizing the elements of being a model equal  
15 employment opportunity employer.

16           Now, I'll briefly highlight some notable accomplishments  
17 from 2024 and identify focus areas guiding our planned work in 2025.

18           Next slide, please. First, the NRC was one of only 10  
19 agencies to achieve an A+ on the Small Business Administration's Annual  
20 Small Business Procurement Scorecard. This rating is based on prime and  
21 subcontracts performance, compliance, technical assistance, and outreach  
22 activities.

23           Second, we have steadily increased the amount of contract  
24 dollars awarded to small businesses, going from \$81 million in FY22 to \$97

1 million in FY24. Not only did this result in the Agency getting the best value  
2 in its procurements, but it also resulted in the Agency far exceeding several of  
3 its federally assigned contracting goals and growing the small business  
4 community. Notably, the Agency tripled the goal for contracting with women-  
5 owned small businesses; nearly doubled the goal for service-disabled,  
6 veteran-owned businesses, and more than doubled the goal for awarding  
7 contracts to companies located in Historically Underutilized Business Zones,  
8 also known as HUB Zones. These successes resulted in NRC being  
9 recognized as a top achieving across the federal government.

10                   And third, the small business team was invited by SBA to  
11 serve as a returning instructor for the Veteran Institute for Procurement  
12 START Program, which assists veterans and service-disabled veterans in  
13 jump-starting their own businesses. This invitation is reserved for agencies  
14 with the highest performing small business programs.

15                   Next slide, please. The small business team's focus for  
16 FY25 is centered on enhancing small business resources. For starters, as  
17 an early adopter of the General Services Administration's Acquisition  
18 Gateway, we launched the Interactive Forecast of Contract Opportunities,  
19 which provides information to small businesses on future contracting  
20 opportunities. And we plan to heavily promote this new tool in various venues  
21 this year.

22                   Second, we're prioritizing the Government's Veteran Action  
23 Plan, which is designed to increase the percentage of federal contracts  
24 awarded to service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses. The team is

1 working closely with the Office of Administration to set aside contracts and  
2 seek out qualified veteran-owned businesses to participate in the bidding  
3 process.

4                   And third, we will continue to remain focused on enhancing  
5 engagement with internal and external constituents to provide necessary  
6 resources, information, and support to make informed contracting decisions.  
7 Planned outreach activities for 2025 include in-person events and continuing  
8 our highly anticipated and virtual small business exchange and matchmaking  
9 events attended by participants from around the world.

10                   Next slide, please. Next, I would like to highlight two  
11 substantial successes of our Civil Rights Program from FY24. First, the  
12 Agency's Collateral Duty EEO Counselors Program, currently consisting of 16  
13 volunteer counselors, was reinvigorated in January 2024. A new  
14 programmatic objective was identified and a 32-hour refresher training was  
15 provided to all counselors to ensure consistent understanding of federal  
16 requirements, statutes, and Agency processes. Keep in mind, these are the  
17 volunteers that take their time to engage with Agency staff and their concerns.

18                   Second, the Civil Rights Program was recognized by the  
19 Department of Health and Human Services for initiating among the most pre-  
20 and post-award civil rights compliance reviews and grants. The achievement  
21 was reported to Congress and the Biden Administration.

22                   Next slide, please. The civil rights team's focus for FY25 is  
23 centered on enhancing its engagement and services. This includes providing  
24 quarterly training to the Collateral Duty EEO Counselors to ensure training



1 requirements remain current and counselors routinely engage to share  
2 learnings, discuss topical areas of concern, and remain abreast of any change  
3 of federal requirements.

4           Additionally, the team will continue to spread awareness of  
5 the Agency's Alternative Dispute Resolution Program and the benefit it  
6 provides in reaching early resolution of complaints. The intended outcome is  
7 to decrease the number of formal complaints through early engagement and  
8 continue to meet and exceed federally established metrics.

9           And lastly, efforts will remain focused on optimizing our  
10 customer service by implementing process efficiencies and best practices to  
11 enhance the Agency's civil rights programs.

12           Next slide, please. Our Civil Rights Program is committed  
13 to resolving equal opportunity complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest  
14 possible level. We take the responsibility of tracking, trending, and reporting  
15 complaint data very seriously. In analyzing data from the last five years, we  
16 have identified the following insights:

17           One, the number of informal and formal complaints remain  
18 relatively stable from FY22 to FY24. With respect to FY24, the most frequent  
19 bases identified in formal complaints include sex and reprisal, with nine  
20 complaints each, followed by age, with six complaints.

21           And lastly, the top issues raised in complaints are terms and  
22 conditions of employment, with a total of eight, followed by promotion and non-  
23 selection and harassment, with five each.

24           Next slide, please. The last area I'll address is the

1 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Outreach Program. In FY24, the team  
2 focused on expanding engagement opportunities with the NRC workforce,  
3 with the intent to foster a sense of community, awareness, respect, and civility.

4 For example, we supported and facilitated 43 Special  
5 Emphasis Committee events that were widely attended by Agency employees  
6 in person and via Teams. The attendance at these events has increased in  
7 FY24.

8 Additionally, the DIALOGUE Initiative was reinvigorated  
9 with four cohorts consisting of 67 individuals who completed the 12-week  
10 course in the past year. These newly minted DIALOGUE Ambassadors,  
11 along with prior cohort graduates, are essential in advancing agencywide  
12 progress and recognizing the inherent value of diversity and discussion. We  
13 have had invaluable results with a deeper awareness of cultural items and a  
14 greater appreciation of each other and plan to leverage the DIALOGUE  
15 graduates in helping advance Agency efforts surrounding culture, civility, and  
16 inclusivity.

17 iCARE is our Initiative on Civility, Awareness, Respect, and  
18 Engagement, and it's focused on overcoming communication gaps through  
19 facilitated dialog. Nine hybrid sessions were held, with plans to hold more in  
20 FY25.

21 These achievements would not be possible without the  
22 support of SBCR's extended family, which includes 133 Special Emphasis and  
23 Resource Group Committee members and executive sponsors; 70  
24 DIALOGUE Ambassadors; 42 Regional DMAC representatives, and 17

1 Inclusive Language Ambassadors.

2 I want to thank you for your commitment to these groups in  
3 advancing the SBCR mission and openly sharing your time and talents to  
4 benefit the NRC community.

5 I invite all of our volunteers in the room, and even those  
6 joining us remotely, to please stand and be recognized. Thank you.

7 Next slide, please. In FY25, the DEIO program's focus is  
8 building off the foundational successes of the current initiatives, while  
9 engaging with other federal agencies and communities of practice. Plans are  
10 underway to host a DIALOGUE Cohort Conference this spring with the  
11 purpose of providing additional training and strategic engagement  
12 opportunities to DIALOGUE Ambassadors. We view this effort as integral in  
13 realizing further progress on achieving the Agency's ideal culture by  
14 reinforcing the principles of inclusion, active listening, civility, and respect.

15 The team is staunchly committed to growing the Minority  
16 Serving Institutions Grants Program through targeted outreach to spread  
17 awareness of the program and grow the prospective recipient pool.  
18 Specifically, we have set an ambitious goal to exponentially increase the  
19 amount of grants in FY25, building off the five awarded to four minority serving  
20 institutions in FY24.

21 And lastly, the team is considering other uses of the  
22 Intergovernmental Personnel Act to replicate the significant success realized  
23 under the current arrangement between the University of Puerto Rico  
24 Mayaguez and the NRC. This novel approach, wherein, two NRC staff from

1 the Office of Research serve as adjunct professors in the University's  
2 Engineering Program, provided the impetus for the University to pursue  
3 establishing a minor in nuclear engineering. I'm excited to report the minor is  
4 undergoing the final approval process with University officials. In return, the  
5 NRC stands to benefit by drawing on the robust pipeline of future talent it  
6 helped create. We are eager to explore how this blueprint for innovative  
7 partnership can be applied to other minority serving institutions.

8           And now, I will turn it over to Tuwanda Smith who will  
9 provide an update on her program area.

10           MS. SMITH: Thank you, Vonna. Greetings, Chair,  
11 Commissioners, and Guests. My name is Tuwanda Smith. I am the  
12 Manager for the Affirmative Employment and Diversity Management Program,  
13 also known as AEDM.

14           AEDM helps NRC to coordinate compliance with regulatory  
15 requirements, assure all employees and applicants enjoy equal employment  
16 opportunity, and ensure that the public has equitable access to NRC programs  
17 and decisionmaking processes.

18           Next slide. The federal government policy is that our  
19 workforce reflects America and those we serve. EEO requires agencies to  
20 use the Civilian Labor Force, CLF, as the benchmark to compare workforce  
21 demographics. AEDM compares the civilian, occupational, and federal labor  
22 forces and tracks deviations over time among NRC demographic categories.

23           In FY24, NRC's workforce was similar to the CLF with four  
24 exceptions, Hispanic and Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, and

1 individuals of two or more races, and males and females, and white females.  
2 All were below their group percentages.

3 A review of five-year averages reveals males continue to  
4 make up 59 percent of NRC's permanent workforce; females, 41 percent, and  
5 minority groups remain unchanged. I will note, however, that NRC's  
6 workforce is similar to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the  
7 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Department of Energy, the  
8 Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency.  
9 Generally, a lower-than-expected representation is due to either a low rate of  
10 entry and/or a high rate of exit.

11 Next slide. AEDM examines employees' representation in  
12 NRC occupations and grades. In FY23, AEDM compared participation rates  
13 in 20 NRC mission-critical occupations and five standard occupations.  
14 Females and minorities were below their occupational percentages in 14  
15 mission-critical occupations at the 12-to-15 grade levels. In the standard  
16 occupations, technical and administrative series were similar to the  
17 occupational percentages. A scarcity of females and minorities were  
18 identified within the professional, service worker, and executive or senior-level  
19 official and manager occupations.

20 In FY22, the NRC recruited 18 internal candidates, four from  
21 corporate offices and 14 from technical offices, and six external candidates  
22 from four federal agencies: the Board of Veterans' Appeals, the Air Force  
23 Materiel Command, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the  
24 Department of Energy -- all to participate in the SES Candidate Development

1 Program. The broader recruitment and enrollment will impact representation  
2 of females, of minorities and persons with disabilities within the NRC and other  
3 federal agencies at the SES level.

4 AEDM shares findings to create awareness about how the  
5 scarcity of females and minorities in the feeder pool impacts employee  
6 mobility, career development paths, and the ability to fill vacancies with  
7 existing NRC employees. AEDM shares analytical findings through our  
8 meetings with NRC's Human Capital Council, offices, and committees.

9 Next slide. In FY18, SBCR and OCHCO put in place a  
10 corrective plan to address negative responses received from departing  
11 employees. In FY22, OCHCO developed a portal for collecting information  
12 from exit interviews, which helps us track demographics, workforce statistics,  
13 and employee responses. In FY24, there were 208 employee separations,  
14 of whom 96 completed exit surveys, which is 46.15 percent. This is a higher  
15 survey participation than in FY23, but lower than fiscal years 2018 and 2022.

16 A trend analysis of selected survey responses shows that  
17 some reasons for separation have changed more significantly than others.  
18 For example, those reporting dissatisfaction with telework tripled from 7 to 21;  
19 stressful work environment more than doubled from 11 to 23; poor  
20 communication more than doubled from 8 to 19, and poor morale went from  
21 13 to 20.

22 I will note, however, there were also some areas where we  
23 are performing better, such as the lack of opportunity for career advancement,  
24 which decreased by nearly half from 31 to 19. Skills not utilized decreased

1 from 18 to 16 and favoritism decreased from 14 to 10.

2 AEDM shares findings to show how separations impact  
3 NRC's work and occupation representation; employee retention, and the  
4 offices' ability to attract new science, technology, engineering, and math --  
5 those areas we call STEM -- talent in a globally competitive market.

6 Next slide. The Equal Employment Opportunity  
7 Commission, also known as EEOC, requires agencies to analyze their  
8 workforce data tables when determining the effectiveness of our EEO  
9 programs. The tables provide employment actions and group participation  
10 by race, ethnicity, sex, and separately, by disability.

11 AEDM analyzes data across employment life cycle, which  
12 includes outreach, recruitment, hiring, selection, advancement, promotion,  
13 training, career development, salary, distribution, incentives, separation, et  
14 cetera.

15 AEDM also analyzed data from collection tracking systems  
16 and other sources; compares EEOC six essential elements of a federal EEO  
17 employer and EEOC's 156 compliance measures and we match that with  
18 NRC's performance results.

19 AEDM's five-step process includes collecting data,  
20 analyzing data, creating awareness, developing action plans, and measuring  
21 the effectiveness of those actions. For example, NRC encountered  
22 challenges in generating EEOC required data from FY17 to 2024.  
23 Leadership was briefed and corrective plans established. On December 7th,  
24 2023, EEOC notified NRC that it had not demonstrated meaningful progress

1 in providing timely access to accurate and complete data required to prepare  
2 an MD-715, Workforce Data Tables.

3 OCHCO and SBCR have made substantial progress to  
4 address years of unresolved data collection and tracking issues. We have  
5 achieved four major outcomes: pinpointed required information and data;  
6 deleted erroneous information and data; improved integrity and quality of  
7 information and data collections.

8 OCHCO has also built internal NRC infrastructure systems  
9 to expand capacity and efficiency of HR information and data collections.  
10 And OCHCO is working to produce real-time information and data on a  
11 biannual basis.

12 Next slide. For years, SBCR has assisted NRC offices to  
13 engage persons with limited English proficiency, LEP, consistent with the  
14 Department of Justice authority and NRC's Principles of Good Regulation.

15 AEDM, with input from 20 offices, drafted the NRC's  
16 Strategic Limited English Proficiency Plan, which is a guide to improve access  
17 to NRC-conducted programs by eligible LEP persons.

18 SBCR and OCHCO developed a portal in which offices can  
19 request services 24/7, and AEDM can collect data; they monitor activities, and  
20 generate reports.

21 Additionally, AEDM administers a contract that assists the  
22 LEP public, while supporting offices carrying out NRC's domestic and  
23 international tasks.

24 In FY24, AEDM translated documents for Region I, Region



1 II, OE, NMSS, and SBCR which included outreach materials, NUREGs, forms,  
2 public notices, and allegation notification letters, and provided language  
3 translation services for NRR during the Regulatory Information Conference,  
4 known as the RIC, and onsite interpretation and document translation for  
5 quality insurance, inspection, and career.

6 In FY23, AEDM provided translation services for the Chair  
7 and Commission Navajo meetings and the RIC; translated NRC's patient  
8 release medical video and the Patient Release Information Brochure, and  
9 translated a report from Finnish into English, so that NRC staff could examine  
10 the lessons learned in human and organizational factors and safety culture.

11 Next slide. The Minority Service Institutions Program, also  
12 known as MSIP, helps NRC produce a diverse skilled workforce. AEDM and  
13 MSIP partners with NRC offices, academia, federal agencies, the White  
14 House, and public-private organizations. AEDM analyzed participation of  
15 minority serving institution students and NRC's workforce development  
16 programs.

17 FY24 outcomes include assisted the Office of Science and  
18 Technology Policy; drafted the Federal Strategy Plan for Advancing STEM,  
19 educating and cultivating STEM talent; participated in the White House HBCU  
20 Week Conference; partnered with GSA to broadcast NRC's contracts on the  
21 GSA Schedule; monitored grant administration activities to ensure equity and  
22 fairness in NRC funding processes; notified contacts about NRC's educational  
23 investment and placement programs, employment, and funding opportunities;  
24 participated in outreach activities, including NRC's Meet and Greet with

1 Alabama A&M University, and collaborations and contract opportunities;  
2 facilitated Office of General Counsel partnering with Howard University to  
3 promote NRC's Honor Law Graduate Program, and vacancies at the Howard  
4 Energy and Environmental Law Society's Job Fair.

5 This concludes my presentation, and I will now turn it over  
6 to Rich. Thank you.

7 MR. REVZAN: Good morning. My name is Rich Revzan,  
8 and I'm the Associate Director for Human Resources Operations and Policy  
9 in the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer.

10 Thank you, Chair Hanson, Commissioners, for the  
11 opportunity to give you an update on our efforts to recruit and retain a diverse  
12 workforce.

13 Next slide. I am pleased to inform you that hiring at the  
14 NRC remains robust. The staff faced and overcame significant challenges  
15 this past year. Ninety-nine percent of the NRC's Headquarters and Regional  
16 full-time equivalent, or FTE, allocations are filled, as we begin FY25;  
17 specifically, 2,775 out of the 2,799 FY25 budgeted allocation. By  
18 comparison, we were at 94 percent at the start of FY23 and 95 percent at the  
19 start of FY24.

20 In FY24, a total of 1,249 hiring actions were processed for  
21 GG employees. This represents about 45 percent of the workforce. Seven  
22 hundred ninety-two of those actions were to fill vacancies on a permanent  
23 basis across the Agency, and 268 of the 792 were filled by external  
24 employees, either from other federal agencies or the private sector. Five

1 hundred twenty-four vacancies were filled internally by NRC employees, either  
2 through promotion or lateral reassignment. I believe this is indicative of the  
3 healthy career tracks that exist for staff growth and the broadening of  
4 regulatory experience overall.

5           Additionally, 457 NRC employees, or 37 percent of the  
6 hiring actions, were filled on a temporary basis, such as a rotational  
7 assignment or a detail. This demonstrates an engaged workforce that is  
8 actively participating in their own personal skill sets and building their own  
9 personal skill sets, while simultaneously building the overall Agency workforce  
10 capacity through the developmental opportunities.

11           All of this was a significant undertaking and it took a total  
12 team effort. And I am very proud of these results. We were able to achieve  
13 this level of hiring despite starting the year with several vacancies of our own.  
14 The team successfully managed this challenge by actively hiring our own  
15 team, and then prioritizing the work.

16           Filling vacancies was our top priority to help ensure offices  
17 and Regions had the resources needed to complete their mission. We  
18 strategically prioritized hiring and delayed other efforts, such as streamlining  
19 the onboarding process and revamping new employee orientation to focus  
20 squarely on hiring. Now that we are mostly caught up, we are turning our  
21 attention towards these activities.

22           Next slide. The staff is focused on processing personnel  
23 actions faster, efficiently, and accurately. For example, we recently  
24 established a standardized timeline for processing personnel actions. This

1 has level-set expectations and offices now understand how and when  
2 effective dates are officially established. This effort has resulted in improved  
3 customer service and allows offices to plan more strategically and effectively.

4 We are also continuing our holistic evaluation of the end-to-  
5 end hiring process to identify and consolidate specific activities. We are  
6 benchmarking with other excepted service agencies and we will be  
7 documenting their best practices in both hiring and in tracking time-to-hire  
8 data. We are committed to implementing more changes in the upcoming  
9 year.

10 Additionally, we are focusing on streamlining strategic  
11 workforce planning to determine the Agency's longer-term staffing and  
12 resource needs. Strategic workforce planning is our process for  
13 systematically identifying and tracking workforce needs to ensure we have the  
14 right people with the right skills at the right time, based on internal and external  
15 changes to our environment.

16 Our goal is to develop a new streamlined process that  
17 leverages staffing and workload data, including budget data, to inform  
18 strategic management staffing decisions. The new process is estimated to  
19 be ready for implementation in June 2025.

20 With participation from program offices, we are also  
21 conducting an environmental scan, which is a critical step for strategic  
22 workforce planning and capacity-building. This provides the foundational  
23 understanding of internal and external factors influencing the Agency's ability  
24 to achieve its mission. The environmental scan also helps identify trends,

1 challenges, and opportunities in the Agency's operational environment, which  
2 will enable us to allocate resources effectively to meet our objectives.

3           Next slide, please. We continue to use NRC's hiring  
4 flexibilities. For example, we used direct-hire authority for several positions,  
5 including STEM positions, acquisitions, cybersecurity, and other IT positions,  
6 to increase artificial intelligence capabilities across our workforce. Of the 268  
7 positions filled in FY24 by external candidates, 73 were hired via direct-hire  
8 authority.

9           We also effectively used other non-competitive hiring  
10 authorities, such as the Schedule A process, to hire persons with disabilities,  
11 as well as several veterans' appointment authority.

12           Additionally, the ADVANCE Act of 2024 provides the NRC  
13 with three key types of authorities focused on recruitment, compensation, and  
14 bonuses for hiring and performance. These authorities will allow the NRC to  
15 move beyond the limitations of the traditional federal workforce system,  
16 particularly in the areas requiring specialized technical expertise. These  
17 authorities are expected to help the NRC respond more rapidly to the  
18 challenges posed by an evolving nuclear industry which demands cutting-  
19 edge regulatory oversight with innovative safety solutions.

20           The staff also actively recruits at Historically Black Colleges  
21 and Universities. For example, the NRC participated in a career fair at  
22 Alabama A&M University in October and 10 students applied for our 2025  
23 Summer Student Internship Program. In fact, we received over 1600  
24 applications for the 2025 internship program. This is about 400 more than

1 last year and we currently have a team reviewing all applications now. We  
2 selected 62 interns in 2024 and we expect to place 89 in 2025.

3                   Lastly, the NRC's University Champions Program  
4 establishes and cultivates relationships with NRC employees and college and  
5 university leadership, faculty, and students to create an established, trusted  
6 campus presence to build a pipeline for future employment possibilities.

7                   Next slide, please. In addition to all that we're doing in  
8 recruitment and hiring, we are always mindful of creating ways to retain and  
9 keep our current staff here at the NRC. People join and stay at the NRC  
10 because of our safety and security mission.

11                   The rewards of public service feeds right into our retention  
12 strategies, such as a great work-life balance; a long and strong tradition of  
13 inclusiveness; an active affinity in community groups; a good pay structure  
14 compared to many other federal agencies; special pay authorities; loan  
15 repayment programs, and comprehensive learning and development  
16 programs for career advancement.

17                   The NRC also intentionally promotes using rotational  
18 assignments and detail opportunities as a key retention strategy. These  
19 opportunities allow everyone to focus on their career, their NRC careers, by  
20 developing, growing, and expanding their knowledge and skill sets across the  
21 Agency. These types of opportunities build a foundational pipeline for future  
22 leadership positions.

23                   Offices and Regions also have dedicated culture teams that  
24 are focused specifically on fostering and building a culture to continually

1 engage its staff. For example, one team is particularly focused on increasing  
2 employee recognition and fostering connections between coworkers, and they  
3 accomplished this by creating a virtual kudos wall via a Teams channel, as a  
4 very easy way for peers to recognize the great work of others.

5                   Next slide, please. The NRC remains committed to  
6 attracting a diverse and talented workforce. Last year, the Office of  
7 Personnel Management, or OPM, revised its pay regulations. As a result,  
8 many federal agencies can no longer consider non-federal salary history when  
9 setting pay for individuals receiving their first appointment to the federal  
10 government. OPM did this to ensure that disparate pay based on gender or  
11 racial or ethnic group in someone's past employment history would not carry  
12 over into their federal service. And the NRC has implemented pay-setting  
13 policies to align with OPM's revised regulations.

14                   OCHCO and all NRC offices and Regions are partnering to  
15 use compensation benchmarking data to ensure that the NRC offers salaries  
16 that best align with industry standards.

17                   And lastly, we are working with offices and Regions to  
18 identify future positions which may be suitable for part-time employment. We  
19 are focusing on mid-career employees who want to take advantage of the  
20 NRC's flexibilities and work-life balance opportunities.

21                   I thank you again for your time and I'll now turn things over  
22 to Hal Pittman.

23                   MR. PITTMAN: Thanks, Rich. And good morning, Chair  
24 and Commissioners. I'm Hal Pittman, the Director of the Office of Public

1 Affairs, and I'm pleased to be here today to talk about how OPA uses social  
2 media tools and content to tell the story of our diverse workforce.

3 Before I begin, I'm told this might be the first time that an  
4 OPA Director has participated in a Commission briefing. If not, then certainly  
5 the first time in a couple of decades. So I am particularly pleased to be here.

6 Next slide. OPA uses Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and  
7 X, formerly known as Twitter, to demonstrate in many ways the Agency's  
8 diverse workforce meeting the NRC mission. We program our posts using  
9 an editorial calendar and six weeks schedule of content to ensure a steady  
10 drumbeat of posts related to special days and months, as well as ongoing  
11 content that demonstrates the diversity of our team through our selection of  
12 photos and topics.

13 Some examples of our targeted content include: the 2024  
14 Black History Month Campaign; pride flag-waving video, a raising video --  
15 excuse me; HBCUs' job fairs; National Women's History Month; an event  
16 celebrating Hispanic heritage; Asian American and Pacific Islanders, et  
17 cetera.

18 OPA also models the Agency's diverse workforce based on  
19 the photos we choose and in the selection of staff to highlight in our  
20 campaigns, including the #NRCHires and the #OnTheJob. We make sure to  
21 highlight a wide variety of staff of different ages, races, abilities, genders, and  
22 job positions.

23 Next slide, please. So here you can see examples of the  
24 content that we're talking about. On the left is an Instagram post of Chair



1 Hanson with the AAMU President Daniel K. Wims during the Chair's visit to  
2 the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This post was the highest-  
3 performing post on Instagram of 2023 and included several photos and videos  
4 as well.

5 On the right is a Facebook post with an example of our Black  
6 History Month Quote Card Campaign, which also ran on Instagram, LinkedIn,  
7 and X. The cards paired past and present African American leaders in the  
8 NRC. I'll have stats on that campaign in just a moment.

9 And if you're wondering, we've had a Facebook page for 10  
10 years now with 14,000 followers. Instagram is NRC's newest platform at  
11 about two years and 1200-plus followers.

12 Next slide, please. And here are a couple more examples  
13 from LinkedIn. Our LinkedIn page has the most followers of any of our  
14 platforms with nearly 43,000 followers. On the left is a LinkedIn post from the  
15 ongoing #OnTheJob campaign. On the right is a post celebrating Pride  
16 Month.

17 These are examples from LinkedIn, but both posts ran  
18 across all platforms. The Pride Month post, in particular, was one of our  
19 highest-performing diversity and inclusion posts in 2024.

20 Next slide, please. So how does inclusion-focused content  
21 perform on social media with our audiences? It performs extremely well on  
22 all platforms, but particularly on Facebook and Instagram.

23 Content featuring our interaction with Historically Black  
24 Colleges and Universities, HBCUs, and women in STEM are among our

1 highest-performing posts.

2                   For example, on the right is an October post from LinkedIn  
3 featuring NRC staff conducting road shows at three HBCUs.

4                   Here are a few more stats. Nearly 25 percent of this year's  
5 top-performing Instagram posts were diversity- and inclusion-focused,  
6 including Pride, women in STEM, Juneteenth, et cetera.

7                   As I mentioned, our top-performing post on Instagram in  
8 2023 was Chair Hanson's visit to Alabama A&M University, with 10,000 total  
9 impressions and nearly 1,000 engagements. And that means 10,000 people  
10 viewed the post and almost 1,000 interacted with it -- liking it, reposting it, et  
11 cetera.

12                   February's Black History Month Campaign ran five posts  
13 across four platforms. Facebook alone had a total of 6500 impressions and  
14 600-plus engagements.

15                   Regarding our ongoing #OnTheJob campaign, a post with  
16 Tammy Bloomer from Region IV has been one of the highest-performing posts  
17 of that particular series with 7,825 impressions and 794 engagements across  
18 four different platforms.

19                   Next slide, please. Of course, sharing news of the Agency  
20 is another mission of our small social media team, and this is an example of  
21 that. Since signing the ADVANCE Act, we've begun amplifying ADVANCE  
22 Act information activities via all four NRC social media platforms.

23                   These screen grabs are from Facebook and LinkedIn. The  
24 image on the left is an August post announcing Dan King as our Special

1 Assistant for the ADVANCE Act. The middle post from LinkedIn shares  
2 information from the first agencywide meeting with a link to the Agency's  
3 website. And the post on the right from LinkedIn illustrates both past and  
4 future discussing ADVANCE Act taskings, while advertising a recent 50th  
5 Year Anniversary Celebration and sharing a link to the streaming video of the  
6 ceremony.

7                   Generally speaking, posts without photographs perform  
8 below average -- meaning a simple graphic with a date and time of an  
9 upcoming meeting will generally see less interaction than a post with a photo  
10 highlighting the same information.

11                   Next slide. The bottom line. So what is it? Simply this,  
12 social media is an excellent tool for demonstrating the Agency's commitment  
13 to diversity and inclusion with targeted content celebrating special days and  
14 months and special people.

15                   Additionally, we're mindful of writing content and selecting  
16 photos that inherently demonstrate the wide array of employees at the  
17 Agency, which helps potential applicants see themselves working here as part  
18 of the NRC's team.

19                   We also seek to simultaneously balance and integrate  
20 content emphasizing our diverse workforce right alongside operational news  
21 and informational topics, like the ADVANCE Act.

22                   To tell an effective story, we must always meet the  
23 audience's needs, not just our own, while being mindful of the resource  
24 constraints of our small OPA team.

1                   To be effective, our social content must be creative, varied,  
2 relevant to the public, and connected to the NRC mission. OPA works hard  
3 to tailor content to each of the social media platforms and we course-correct  
4 when necessary, based on metrics, to help illustrate and amplify NRC news  
5 and information alongside our professional diverse workforce.

6                   I thank you for the opportunity to present today, and I'll now  
7 pass the baton to Eric Carfang in Region I. Erin?

8                   MS. CARFANG: Okay. Good morning, Chair and  
9 Commissioners. I'm Erin Carfang, a Branch Chief in Region I's Division of  
10 Operating Reactor Safety.

11                   One of the regional approaches to ensuring government is  
12 accessible to a diverse population of students is in the extended recruitment  
13 efforts coordinated by OCHCO and supported by regional staff from all four  
14 Regions.

15                   Our goal is to hire top-notch talent into the Agency and  
16 spread awareness through in-person recruiting efforts and virtual hiring  
17 platforms utilized by students that the NRC is hiring entry-level positions.

18                   The Regions have unique hiring needs, as a majority of our  
19 staff either frequently travel or relocate as part of their job requirements. To  
20 meet our future inspection needs in key areas, we worked with OCHCO to  
21 develop entry-level postings for both engineering and materials inspectors in  
22 all four Regions.

23                   With entry-level, full-time positions posted for each Region,  
24 we selected schools that were near regional offices to attract local talent who

1 like the area where our offices are. We selected recruiting events near  
2 difficult-to-fill Resident Inspector sites, seeking to attract candidates who may  
3 want to return to those areas. We also went to several universities with  
4 strong health physics programs.

5 In a snapshot, across the Regions, our staff supported five  
6 recruiting events near difficult-to-fill sites; 58 percent of the Agency's college  
7 career fairs associated with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and  
8 42 percent of events for minority serving institution programs.

9 We effectively utilized the virtual recruitment platform  
10 Handshake to post our positions that were seen across the country, reaching  
11 out to students that were beyond our in-person recruiting resources alone  
12 could accomplish. I know this worked because they reached out to me, and  
13 these were schools that we did not attend.

14 So, as a result of our efforts, each Region had between 125  
15 and 225 applicants for the entry-level position, allowing us to have a wide pool  
16 of candidates to develop as future inspectors.

17 Next slide, please. As the Regions continue to conduct  
18 significant hiring activities, this leads to the need to ensure new staff are  
19 included in the NRC culture. One of our primary ways to share our values is  
20 our mentorship and training programs. Our experienced staff readily assume  
21 the responsibility of training the next generation of inspectors in both the  
22 reactor and materials programs, creating an environment where our new  
23 employees feel included and valued by the Agency. By making the NRC a  
24 place where new employees want to work, we ensure that the recruitment

1 process continues through to the next step of retention.

2                   Additionally, not all new hires to the Agency are recent  
3 college graduates. Regional offices recognize that several new staff have  
4 significant work experience and can assist early in the training process, based  
5 on their technical knowledge.

6                   For example, operations licensing examiners in  
7 qualifications routinely bring decades of experience to the Agency. In Region  
8 I, when they're not actively in training, those future examiners attend the  
9 Resident Inspector status meetings, frequently providing immediate  
10 assistance, based on their extensive knowledge. By giving our new staff  
11 meaningful work early, they're contributing to the Agency's mission and  
12 building our culture.

13                   But we can't forget about our experienced staff. Rotational  
14 opportunities are important for Regions to utilize, to ensure our staff continue  
15 their professional development, readying them for future promotional or desire  
16 lateral opportunities in the Agency.

17                   Examples of rotational opportunities include cross-  
18 qualification opportunities in areas with potential staffing shortages and Acting  
19 Resident and Senior Resident rotations. Our staff are curious and they're  
20 looking for ways to expand their professional skills. We continue to attract  
21 people to the NRC with the ability to lead staff and let them influence their own  
22 career path based on experiences they have on rotational opportunities. And  
23 we strive to ensure we are fair and equitable in how those opportunities are  
24 distributed.

1                   And we continue to provide opportunities for engagement in  
2 the workplace reflecting our diverse staff. The Regions continue to support  
3 Diversity Management Advisory Committee activities.

4                   Part of building a workplace community is accomplished by  
5 sharing our experiences during lunch breaks at book club, the chili cookoff,  
6 and the salsa contest. The goal, the better we understand each other, the  
7 better we are together.

8                   Next slide, please. The Regions continue to identify  
9 opportunities to engage more effectively with external stakeholders who may  
10 not speak or read English fluently. The Regions are identifying opportunities  
11 to expand languages included in our public interactions to ensure interested  
12 members of the community can have an opportunity to participate in NRC  
13 regional activities.

14                  Examples include identifying a well-attended Region I  
15 meeting as an opportunity to conduct additional outreach to the community  
16 through publishing the meeting notice in commonly spoken languages in the  
17 area. With the help of SBCR, the local meeting notice was translated into 15  
18 languages spoken by the residents of the area.

19                  Another example, materials inspectors now carry cards in  
20 Spanish when going to Puerto Rico for licensee visits that offer the licensees  
21 the option to converse with a fluent Spanish-speaker to facilitate effective  
22 inspection activities.

23                  And at a community night for a facility in Texas, the Resident  
24 Office staff included a Spanish-speaking member who was available to

1 converse with attendees in Spanish.

2                   The Regions are continuing their efforts to identify ways to  
3 effectively communicate with both licensees and members of the public who  
4 need additional assistance to be involved in the NRC's regulatory processes.

5                   Focus areas include looking to certify regional employees in  
6 the NRC's Strategic Limited English Proficiency Program, as well as ensuring  
7 hearing-impaired and language services are implemented in our public  
8 meetings.

9                   These first steps are needed to improve accessibility of  
10 government to groups who have not historically participated in our processes  
11 in the past.

12                   Thank you for the opportunity to highlight regional efforts  
13 and inclusivity and accessibility. I'll turn it over to Jill Shepherd.

14                   MS. SHEPHERD: Thank you, Erin. Good morning, Chair  
15 Hanson, Commissioners, and my Fellow NRC Colleagues. I'm Jill Shepherd,  
16 the Secretary for the Native American Advisory Committee.

17                   And first I want to thank the Commission for your continued  
18 support of the numerous diversity and inclusion efforts throughout the Agency.

19                   Next slide, please. At the NRC, the Diversity Management  
20 Advisory Committee, or DMAC, represents the collective voice of nine  
21 volunteer groups, eight equal employment opportunity advisory committees,  
22 and an employee resource group. These committees are the Advisory  
23 Committee for African Americans, the Advisory Committee for Employees with  
24 Disabilities, the Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee, the Diversity



1 Advisory Committee on Ageism, the Federal Women's Program Advisory  
2 Committee, the Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee, the  
3 Native American Advisory Committee, the NRC Pride Alliance Advisory  
4 Committee, and the Veterans Employee Resource Group.

5 I'm honored to be able to speak to you today on behalf of  
6 DMAC, who works with SBCR to support recruitment, professional  
7 development, retention, and diversity, as stated in the Agency's Inclusive  
8 Diversity Strategic Plan. Two affinity groups -- NRC Blacks in Government  
9 and the NRC Technical Women's Network -- support DMAC in these efforts.

10 This statement communicates the joint perspectives of the  
11 DMAC members on matters of great interest to our constituencies and the  
12 NRC staff at large.

13 Next slide, please. The DMAC and our special emphasis  
14 groups are a shining example of how we work better together. An ideal we  
15 all share is that we must continue to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and  
16 accessibility. As we create a more inclusive and equitable NRC, diversity  
17 must be seen as a strength, and inclusivity is paramount for us to continually  
18 adapt to maintain a strong mission-drive culture. We must strive to ensure  
19 that we bring talent to the NRC with a variety of experiences and perspectives,  
20 as we continue towards becoming a modern and risk-informed regulator.

21 Our accomplishments serve as the building blocks and  
22 guiding principles to continue to work better together. The work our  
23 committees perform on behalf of the Agency staff is incredibly important in  
24 maintaining and building trust and an inclusive culture here at the NRC.

1                   We also provide valuable service to the communities in  
2                   which we serve through food, clothing, and toy drives, as well as many other  
3                   outreach activities throughout the year.

4                   One way the Commission can provide support for our  
5                   committees is for you to encourage staff participation in one of the EEO  
6                   committees, where they can directly impact our efforts within the NRC and in  
7                   our communities.

8                   As our organizations, our constituents, and the Agency at  
9                   large continue to navigate a dynamic work environment, DMAC would like to  
10                  highlight several areas where we want to continue to focus our energy over  
11                  the next year.

12                  The support and commitment of our senior leaders will be  
13                  invaluable as we advance in these areas. We encourage our staff,  
14                  managers, and senior leaders to partner with our special emphasis programs  
15                  when participating in recruitment activities and when communicating  
16                  successes within our programs to both internal and external audiences. Let's  
17                  celebrate how our diverse workforce is paramount to meeting our NRC  
18                  mission of protecting public health and safety.

19                  We should continue to aspire to increase our representation  
20                  numbers and leverage existing tools and resources to achieve results. For  
21                  example, the Native American Advisory Committee continues to target  
22                  colleges and universities and to leverage its relationship with the American  
23                  Indian Science and Engineering Society, or AISES, and its Government  
24                  Relations Council, to meet our recruitment goals for Native Americans.

1           Our focus should continue to be on hiring new staff from  
2 diverse backgrounds to revitalize our workforce and retain mid-career  
3 employees to feed our leadership pipeline.

4           Over the last 10 years, our national STEM workforce has  
5 gradually diversified and we encourage the NRC to strive to be consistent with  
6 this trend, including increasing representation of women and minorities.

7           As the NRC considers our future challenges -- advanced  
8 fuels and reactors; new emerging technologies, such as fusion and medical  
9 advancements; spent fuel, and environmental justice -- we can only be  
10 successful in our mission if our future staff and leaders are not only technically-  
11 savvy, but can also relate to the stakeholders and the communities that are  
12 impacted by the technologies that we regulate.

13           We are motivated and encouraged by the progress the NRC  
14 is making in becoming a more inclusive workplace for all of us. Having a  
15 diverse and inclusive workforce will ensure we include a variety of views that  
16 can be leveraged to ensure public health and safety of all constituencies, while  
17 promoting security and protecting the environment.

18           As we continue to look for ways to work better together, we  
19 encourage our senior leaders to consider increasing the NRC's recruitment of  
20 members of diverse communities, such as persons with disabilities, members  
21 of the LGBTQIA+ community, and older Americans.

22           Our individual organizations are leveraging relationships  
23 with institutions outside of the NRC, such as the Native American Advisory  
24 Committee with AISES, and our Agency's recruitment efforts could be

1 bolstered by similar relationships at the institutional level.

2 We are excited for new opportunities to work better together  
3 in building an NRC for all of us. Thank you. And I'll turn it back over to Mirela  
4 for closing remarks.

5 MS. GAVRILAS: Thank you very much. We are ready to  
6 answer your questions.

7 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Mirela. And thanks  
8 everybody for being here this morning. I always appreciate hearing about the  
9 Agency's efforts in this, and I really like the theme, this year's theme of "Better  
10 Together."

11 And in keeping with the theme, I think this is an important  
12 time to reiterate and maybe revisit and highlight the NRC's organizational  
13 values, right, iSOCCER, that we all have, and in particular I think one of those,  
14 which is respect. And, you know, the commitment to respecting individuals'  
15 backgrounds and beliefs and viewpoints isn't a partisan issue. It really goes  
16 to the very heart of the Agency's effectiveness and the health of our workplace.  
17 And our public health and safety mission is really best achieved through  
18 valuing our diversity, I think as we really heard this morning through seeing  
19 and respecting individuals in all their complexity.

20 So as we close out the year, and with this the final  
21 Commission meeting, I think, for 2024, if I remember correctly, I encourage  
22 the staff; and I'm certainly going to do this myself, to reengage with those  
23 organizational values with the iSOCCER and to consider how best to embody  
24 those values going forward in both the Agency's and individual actions. So

1 just kind of wanted to start off that way.

2 Vonna, I want to start with you and just give a huge shout-  
3 out to the Acquisitions Team for that A-plus rating again in the Small Business  
4 Program. And I want to -- one of the things I want to point out about it -- and  
5 there is going to be a question at the end of this --

6 MS. ORDAZ: Okay.

7 CHAIR HANSON: -- trust me -- is as I recall, the standards  
8 and the benchmarks that the Small Business Administration puts out, they  
9 keep ratcheting those up for the people who perform well --

10 MS. ORDAZ: Yes, sir.

11 CHAIR HANSON: -- like us and who get that A-plus.  
12 They're like, great, go further, and the next thing, and the next thing. And so  
13 it wasn't just this year that we got an A-plus. We've had an A or an A-plus for  
14 a number of years.

15 MS. ORDAZ: Ten-plus years.

16 CHAIR HANSON: Yeah, 10-plus years, right? And so in  
17 each one of those, I think particularly in the last three or four years, that target  
18 keeps kind of moving up. And so I think just to kind of, not just recognize the  
19 consistency, but the progress that's represented in that continuous A-plus  
20 rating is just -- I think is a huge accomplishment. So kudos to the team for  
21 that.

22 So then the question is how are we going to keep doing that,  
23 right? Because presumably, you know, our team is really smart. They've  
24 got all the low-hanging fruit. We're having to presumably think even harder.

1 And whether -- I wondered if you could kind of talk about what those actions  
2 are and when you talk about engaging internal stakeholders to continue to  
3 meet those metrics. If you wanted to maybe say a little bit more about that.

4 MS. ORDAZ: Absolutely. Thank you so much for  
5 recognizing that the goal keeps moving. And it's a carrot. We keep  
6 achieving it. So it's intended and it's working. One year, this past year, one  
7 of the goals increased by 460 percent. So it shows you, it's quite remarkable.  
8 But the in-reach and outreach is huge that we're working on and we're  
9 focusing even more on in-reach even this next year.

10 You may have heard of the term COR Town Hall. COR  
11 stands for contracting officer representative. It's quite a vibrant group.  
12 There's CORs across this entire Agency under the leadership of the Office of  
13 Administration. And so these COR town hall meetings -- our Small Business  
14 Program is involved with being featured speakers at these COR town halls.  
15 There's also a -- so we continue to impress the importance of the small  
16 business area.

17 There's also a COR working group that has stood up. They  
18 actually won the Innovation Award this past year -- or this year, actually -- and  
19 doing things such as streamlining and making efficiencies in all of the  
20 processes that the CORs deal with. And that helps highlight areas within  
21 small business. So there's a lot of internal in-reach. There's training  
22 sessions. There's a whole variety of in-reach, but -- as well as outreach.

23 This year -- we used to have a very prominent internal  
24 matchmaking and small business exchange. We even had representatives

1 from Congress here and kick it off in the past. So since COVID they were all  
2 virtual. Well, this year and this 2025 we will be having our first -- coming back  
3 to our in-person exchange. And that's where we match Agency needs with  
4 small business capabilities. And we expect that to be highly successful.  
5 And we'll keep moving, keep communicating internally and building those  
6 interactions with our great colleagues in the Office of Administration.

7 CHAIR HANSON: Oh, great. Thank you. And great  
8 work to you and the rest of the team.

9 MS. ORDAZ: Thank you.

10 CHAIR HANSON: So appreciate that.

11 MS. ORDAZ: Goes to the team. Thank you.

12 CHAIR HANSON: My next question -- I don't know if this is  
13 going to be for Tuwanda or Rich, or maybe a combination of the two of you.

14 But, you know, Tuwanda, you mentioned I think one of the  
15 challenges of -- increasing and maintaining women and minority  
16 representation in the Agency was fewer people coming in and maybe fewer -  
17 - a lower proportion of representation kind of coming in and a higher going out.

18 And I think it was, Rich, in your presentation you said we  
19 had 208 separations in 2024. And so is there any diving into that data that  
20 you all have done or can do that actually tells us a little bit about not just the  
21 reasons?

22 Which I thought, Tuwanda, your chart on why people were  
23 leaving was -- but who's leaving and matching up those reasons with the kinds  
24 of folks that are leaving. For example, like out of the 208 how many were

1 retirements versus voluntary separations?

2 MS. SMITH: Okay. So the answer is yes and yes --

3 CHAIR HANSON: Okay.

4 MS. SMITH: -- because I'm very proud to announce that  
5 we do do in-depth analysis and look at all the data. We're looking for more  
6 than just the comments made. We're looking to what groups making  
7 comments? Where are they being made? And when we also look at -- not  
8 only separation. When we're looking at entry, we're looking to see -- we're  
9 doing a great job, if I can say this, in what we do recruitment-wise. So we are  
10 attracting the types of talent and in the demographic groups that we want to  
11 see. We're looking at processes. Is there something happening along the  
12 line of processing?

13 So when we put together a corrective plan, that corrective  
14 plan follows through all the data analysis, not only, you know, who's applying,  
15 who's identifying, what's happening. We know where gaps are, for example,  
16 in the hiring processes. And what we are having to do a better job is that --  
17 we have corrective plans.

18 And there was a part I told you that we go back and assess  
19 that. So we know now that we have to not only work with OCHCO, but all of  
20 our offices and helping them see and gather information about where these  
21 gaps are and then how we can inter-plan. So we are actually meeting with  
22 offices as well.

23 So it's a all-in-one effort. And I think we're getting very  
24 good responses so you should get some reports on that and be able to see



1 what we're trying to do to rectify things.

2 CHAIR HANSON: Yeah, thank you. I really appreciate  
3 that, with the emphasis on retention as you --

4 MS. SMITH: Yes.

5 CHAIR HANSON: We heard a lot I think across all the  
6 presentations about recruitment and the things that we're doing and the  
7 tremendous success, not just Region I, but all the regions have had in  
8 recruiting and staffing. And then the other side of that coin is really the  
9 retention piece. And we want this place to be a good place to work, a great  
10 place to work for everybody. But also then really where it's maybe not  
11 working for certain people or certain groups of people to try and figure out how  
12 to strengthen those areas. So really appreciate that emphasis on data  
13 analysis.

14 So let's see. Rich, just a quick question on the recruiting  
15 side.

16 MR. REVZAN: Yes?

17 CHAIR HANSON: Is there -- do we have like a yield rate?  
18 Like in colleges and universities, in terms of, you know, offers made and offers  
19 accepted and then people who actually come on board and so forth?

20 MR. REVZAN: Yeah, so, at the macro level, yes.

21 CHAIR HANSON: Okay.

22 MR. REVZAN: We track numbers of hires every pay  
23 period, who's coming in, who's coming out. We still struggle quite honestly  
24 with matching it to which recruitment effort and getting down into the individual

1 level. And that's something that I want to work on moving forward. It's a  
2 very manual process right now. It's labor-intensive. But we do track, you  
3 know, like, number of -- obviously where we go, who we target, number of  
4 applications received, number who have qualified, you know, and go through  
5 the process, but trying to tie it back to a specific reason why is always the  
6 struggle.

7 CHAIR HANSON: Okay. Got it. Thank you very much.

8 Jill, I'm going to end with you. I've really appreciated and  
9 found enormously rewarding just participation in the advisory committees and  
10 employee resource groups in the Agency, so I just wanted to give you -- with  
11 my minute or so left to allow you to see if you wanted to make a public service  
12 announcement for employee participation and maybe a recruitment pitch for  
13 your -- for these groups in the Agency.

14 MS. SHEPHERD: Thank you, Chair Hanson. I appreciate  
15 that opportunity. Absolutely. I think being a member of one of these  
16 committees is one of the most rewarding opportunities that we have here at  
17 the Agency, not only to help your fellow colleagues, but also to do those  
18 outreach efforts into the communities in which we live and operate.

19 So I believe we have vacancies on almost every committee,  
20 so if you are interested in participating, please reach out. You can reach out  
21 to me, anyone of these people or Dorothea Washington does a fantastic job  
22 of maintaining our membership on the various committees. But it's -- if you  
23 want to make a difference here and in our communities, please consider  
24 signing up for one of the advisory committees.

1 CHAIR HANSON: Fantastic. Thanks. You heard it here,  
2 folks.

3 (Laughter.)

4 CHAIR HANSON: There's lots of opportunities for  
5 engagement and leadership.

6 (Applause.)

7 CHAIR HANSON: So, Jill, thank you.

8 With that, I'll hand it over to Commissioner Wright.

9 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you, Chair, and good  
10 morning. Welcome. Thank you for your presentations. And because of the  
11 Chair's pandering right there to Jill --

12 (Laughter.)

13 CHAIR HANSON: Shameless pandering.

14 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: -- that question has been  
15 answered.

16 (Laughter.)

17 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: And that's early in the  
18 process.

19 So, and also I wanted to follow the Chair's comments as  
20 well, Vonna, and congratulate y'all for your A-plus rating. That's more than  
21 10 years now, that right?

22 MS. ORDAZ: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I mean, that's amazing. And  
24 I also wanted to just kind of emphasize a little bit more his comments about

1 what -- the SBA goals, right, and how they keep ratcheting them up. And I  
2 think you said one area was 460 percent more?

3 MS. ORDAZ: Yes, sir.

4 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I mean, I think that's  
5 amazing, one, that you're able to do that, but what that proves is that excellent  
6 is -- excellence is attainable. It's not just attainable, but it is sustainable.  
7 And so what you're doing in your area is something that can be replicated  
8 throughout the Agency and in every area from the Commission all the way  
9 down to the guard gates.

10 So I wanted just to give you a quick opportunity if you could.  
11 How are you sharing what you're doing with the other areas of the Commission  
12 within the Agency to kind of encourage them or to show them how it's done?

13 MS. ORDAZ: Well, today is one way. Through this  
14 meeting we get to share it with the entire Agency. But we share successes  
15 through the COR groups that we were talking about, the COR Town Halls,  
16 which are, you know, widely attended by 150-plus folks. We share some  
17 successes through our Daily Notes that go up through the chain, up through  
18 to you so you can see.

19 Some of our events we have where it's -- we don't invite the  
20 Agency necessarily. We invite the small business community. But we take  
21 our forecast -- we have this new interactive forecast and we take that to the  
22 venues. And so, and then we give feedback afterwards. So through our  
23 interactive forecast, that's another way to communicate across the Agency  
24 because they're also seeing what our needs are.

1                   And so we also have periodics. Since COVID, I started  
2 these periodics with every office and every region. So we talk about small  
3 business twice a year with every office and every region. This year we did  
4 road shows. We went to all four regional offices and the Technical Training  
5 Center. We talked about all of our program areas. And we just keep building  
6 those relationships and keep communicating not just the successes -- it's not  
7 about that. It's more of what we have to offer and what the importance of the  
8 goals are and how we can match those to.

9                   And I would have to say the strong relationship that we have  
10 with the Acquisition Management Division in Admin, because it is one of a  
11 kind. We have a very, very good working system between our two programs.

12                   COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

13                   MS. ORDAZ: And if we didn't have that, we wouldn't be as  
14 successful.

15                   COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you for that. You're  
16 an example that can be built upon throughout the whole Agency.

17                   Erin, I'm going to come to you next. So thank you for the  
18 hard work that you and your team are doing and engaging potential hires  
19 throughout, you know, the country at college fairs and HBCUs and everything  
20 else. What are we doing, or have we given any thought to try to reach  
21 students before they get to college, in high school or even middle school or to  
22 get them interested in a career at -- maybe in nuclear technologies, and  
23 especially here at the NRC, before they pick a college or before they pick a  
24 major?

1 MS. CARFANG: I think there are a lot of people do  
2 volunteer their own personal time to do outreach for STEM activities, but I  
3 don't think we've done anything focused on that. But it's an excellent  
4 opportunity to reach them, to encourage them to actually go into those fields.

5 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Is it worth us --

6 MS. CARFANG: I think it probably is, especially if you're  
7 looking at going into schools that are feeders and to encourage people to go  
8 into these in the HBCUs, the minority-serving institutions, and even STEM,  
9 women in STEM. It's important to encourage them that these are  
10 opportunities they have to them. And if they aren't already there in college,  
11 we can't hire them, so.

12 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I think we also should expand  
13 and look at tech programs, community colleges where we can build a  
14 workforce because we need other people, too. We need accountants and we  
15 need, you know, people who do important work, but they may not necessarily  
16 be a nuclear engineer, for example.

17 So, Hal, coming to you. I really appreciate how you're  
18 doing your job, by the way. And this is your first visit. And I can't remember,  
19 since I've been here, that we've had a communications guy here. So with the  
20 change in landscape for social media, what is your team doing to stay ahead  
21 of the curve and find ways to engage young people on social media, even all  
22 the way down to, you know, high school?

23 MR. PITTMAN: Right. Well, first of all, so the different  
24 platforms that we have -- so Twitter is kind of the newsy platform, if you will.

1 So that's the way we get ahead of some activities. So we'll put a Twitter post,  
2 or X post, out today that's focused on something that maybe is going to  
3 happen a month from now, or a month-and-a-half from now. So that gives us  
4 a little bit forward-looking opportunity to engage our different stakeholders and  
5 communities, right?

6 The other platforms, the LinkedIns, the Facebooks, they  
7 give us an opportunity to do more feature-y content that is sticky sometimes,  
8 right? That gets a lot of reposting or likes, et cetera, et cetera.

9 We're also going to be moving to a new platform here at the  
10 end of this year and early in 2025. Threads, it's similar to X or Twitter. And  
11 so it's another sort of newsy platform where we're be able to imbed releases  
12 that announce the things that are coming out in the future.

13 And then we're always open to getting feedback from not  
14 just commissioners on the road with photos, but the entire staff, right? So if  
15 there's an event that's going on that deserves some play on social media, we  
16 like to get those photos. As I said in my briefing, photos with people play a  
17 lot better than simple graphics, right? And so we want to get, you know,  
18 pictures of our people in action or maybe, you know, at an event where they're  
19 talking about STEM to school kids or whatever, right? And we can use that  
20 as long as we have the right releases in place --

21 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

22 MR. PITTMAN: -- and that sort of thing to help advertise  
23 our mission.

24 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yeah. Well, personally I

1 appreciate the NRC by-the-numbers stuff that goes out occasionally. It's  
2 easy to read and it tells a story. I also like what I've seen DOE do. Katy Huff  
3 did things which it was like very simple videos about a topic, right?

4 MR. PITTMAN: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: And there are some very  
6 complex things that we do that can be explained in a video very quickly, which  
7 maybe there's an opportunity for us there. We have a great video crowd  
8 here.

9 MR. PITTMAN: Yeah, I've seen that.

10 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: A shameless plug for the  
11 video guys.

12 So, Rich, welcome. It's your first time, too.

13 MR. REVZAN: Yes. Thank you.

14 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: And so I'll be kind.

15 MR. REVZAN: Appreciate that.

16 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Really, thank you for all the  
17 work that you're doing in hiring. I know, as you know, this is a huge focus for  
18 the Agency, and it's critical right now. And you've heard what Erin and Hal  
19 we're saying, too.

20 So I got two questions for you. On the Strategic Workforce  
21 Planning process, when will it be ready, and what is the time frame for being  
22 able to use the new tool?

23 MR. REVZAN: Right. So the conclusion of what we're  
24 doing now will be -- everything will be ready for implementation in early



1 summer. I'm saying June 2025.

2 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Okay. All right. And  
3 looking at the time to hire, are there any quick wins we can get here?  
4 Because I know it appears to the Commission -- and because we've heard  
5 over the last couple of years that it was at 120, or 130, then it dropped down  
6 to 120-something or 110 --

7 MR. REVZAN: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: -- now it seems to be back at  
9 that 140 number, you know, what can we do in the short term to get this  
10 number down through either expanded use of our existing direct hiring  
11 authority or the provisions that are in the ADVANCE Act?

12 MR. REVZAN: So two things come to mind. One is really  
13 the advisory services that my team does. It's educating and reminding  
14 everybody what the current flexibilities are, what the options are, and  
15 understanding what the need is. You know, the go-to gut is I need to backfill  
16 this position the exact same way. Go find me somebody and do it the  
17 traditional way.

18 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right.

19 MR. REVZAN: And what I'm looking to do is have our staff  
20 say, okay, that's great. Have you considered this? Are there other options?  
21 We have résumé repositories. We have, you know, certification lists that we  
22 already have that are active, you know, let's talk about what the true need is.  
23 And then figure out just the exact strategy moving forward and keep teaching  
24 people what the various flexibilities are.

1                   Then secondarily, in terms of like quick wins or low-hanging  
2 fruit, it's also advising folks, you know, a lot of time on interviews -- getting  
3 your interview panel together, rating panels. Have all of that while the  
4 vacancy announcement is running. Have your interview questions all set.  
5 Have placeholders in place for, you know, the interviews themselves. There  
6 are ways to consolidate and not necessarily streamline, but run certain  
7 activities simultaneous, it does not need to be sequential. It's not necessarily  
8 linear, you know, certain things that we have to do, so do them in the most  
9 efficient way. Work smarter, not harder.

10                   COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yeah, I know that FERC  
11 does something very similar to that. Mirela?

12                   MS. GAVRILAS: Going to jump in here. So one of the  
13 things that I asked for was to digitize the résumés that we have, and perhaps  
14 consider a change from looking at minimum qualification before the hiring  
15 official has access to the data to actually looking at the résumés. And if you  
16 find people who are qualified, then put them -- who meet the requirements --  
17 then put them through the sift of minimum qualified. So Rich is working on  
18 that, too.

19                   COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you so much.

20                   Thank you, Chair.

21                   CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Wright.  
22 Commissioner Caputo?

23                   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Thanks everyone for being  
24 here. Thank you very much for your presentations. I will add my kudos to

1 Jill in addition to the Chairman.

2                   Those events, I have to say, are just always very engaging  
3 and thought-provoking, or reflect a lot of effort on the part of the volunteers,  
4 and I think they do a very educational service to those that participate. So in  
5 addition, shameless plug, I encourage folks to tap into those events and  
6 participate because they are a wonderful way to come together and learn.

7                   So I'm going to take my questions in a different direction. I  
8 often speak about how the growth in electricity demand is accelerating. And  
9 just yesterday we saw an announcement about Meta seeking one to four  
10 gigawatts of new nuclear generation. So this is just one more signal that our  
11 licensing workload is going to grow. With the passage of ADVANCE Act,  
12 Congress stressed how important it is for the Agency to execute this new work  
13 effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner. And we continue to get  
14 questions from Congress on how the Agency is preparing and whether or not  
15 the Agency is ready to do that.

16                   So when I start pondering that kind of a question, I begin  
17 with sort of a series of rhetorical questions. How many people do we have  
18 doing licensing and environmental reviews? How many more do we need  
19 based on the licensing workload that we know is coming? Of the hundreds  
20 of new hires over the last two years, how many have we hired for licensing  
21 and environmental reviews? And how long will it take to get them fully trained?  
22 How many more do we need to hire? And if our workload begins to grow  
23 faster than we've planned for, how many people do we currently have that are  
24 qualified for licensing and environmental reviews who might be currently

1 assigned to other work? How do we find them, and could they be reassigned  
2 to give the Agency some flexibility in surge capacity for licensing and  
3 environmental reviews that may grow beyond what we are projecting?

4 I'm struggling with how the answers to these questions  
5 aren't readily available, and that for me provokes foundational concerns about  
6 the lack -- the Agency's lack of a Strategic Workforce Plan. This process has  
7 been under review and evaluation since 2022. It's been on hold for almost  
8 two years. In that time we've hired over 600 personnel and are now within  
9 one percent of our FTE allocation, as Rich noted earlier.

10 I can't discern if this hiring was done with enough foresight  
11 to ensure that we either have, or will have, the necessary staff to meet the  
12 workload demands, much less the agility we may need to meet the challenges  
13 of dynamic industry growth. So without the data that is responsive to the  
14 question I described above, it's difficult to conclude that the Agency is ready.  
15 It's also difficult to envision what the basis is for budget development without  
16 knowing the answers to those questions. This to me is the very definition of  
17 enterprise risk.

18 This is not merely responsibility for OCHCO. The entire  
19 Leadership Team should be using data and strategic foresight to make  
20 informed decisions, to manage resources, including human capital. And if  
21 the entire Leadership Team was aligned and focused on solving this issue, it's  
22 hard to imagine how it's still lingering after two years.

23 So, Rich, I'm going to go easy on you, too, a little. I'm  
24 thrilled that you chose the NRC. I'm glad you're here.

1 MR. REVZAN: Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I recognize you haven't been  
3 with us long, so these questions aren't a reflection on your tenure, but  
4 definitely perhaps food for thought in terms of the challenges that you need to  
5 be addressing in your current role with us.

6 In the absence of a Strategic Workforce Plan what's been  
7 guiding the hiring decisions?

8 MR. REVZAN: Right. So we meet regularly on a either  
9 weekly or even biweekly cadence with the various offices and regions, their  
10 Leadership Teams in particular. So for example, we meet monthly with RES  
11 -- I'm blanking what it stands for -- Office of Research, and we talk through  
12 what are they looking for, what are your priorities, where are we going, you  
13 know, what do you need us to do to support the mission that you have?

14 We do something similar, regular touch points with other  
15 offices like NRR, NMSS, et cetera. So that's right now how we determine  
16 where to focus our resources in terms of the hiring needs at this particular  
17 time.

18 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: That sounds like that's  
19 probably focused on the near term.

20 MR. REVZAN: I was just going to say, to your point, we  
21 need to step back and take a strategic approach at a more macro level and  
22 say, in two years, are we going to have what you need? Are we going to  
23 have the right people with the right skills to handle the demand that is  
24 forthcoming?

1                   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So one of the things you  
2 mentioned earlier, that a Strategic Workforce Planning process will be  
3 available for implementation this summer, which means that it won't be  
4 available to inform budget development for FY '27 at this point, which I think  
5 raises further concerns for me. You mentioned an environmental scan  
6 underway. I presume there is some sort of an environmental scan that goes  
7 on in budget development every cycle. So I guess I have a question as to  
8 how your environmental scan is differing from the work that's already been  
9 done.

10                   MR. REVZAN: So that I do not know the answer to --

11                   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay.

12                   MR. REVZAN: -- right now and I'll have to take --

13                   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: That's fine.

14                   MR. REVZAN: -- that one back.

15                   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: That's fine. So, Mirela, I've  
16 been asking these questions for over a year. How do you plan to hold the  
17 Executive Team accountable for getting beyond talking points to actually  
18 ensure that this is fixed with a sense of urgency and what actions do you  
19 commit to going forward?

20                   MS. GAVRILAS: So there is a sense of urgency. And with  
21 regard to the environmental scan, there's a combination of answers. I'm  
22 speaking as a recent office director. And I know that my divisions, when they  
23 had to fill a vacancy, they didn't just go ahead and fill the vacancy on an  
24 existing position description. They actually revised the position description to

1 match what they anticipated the needs are.

2                   And the divisions have a sense of what's coming down.  
3 They have a very good sense of what's coming down the pike. They don't  
4 have the long-term trajectory, that defensible environmental scan followed by  
5 a rendition of what work is coming our way followed by what specific skills we  
6 need, what footprint the Agency is going to have. But my commitment is to  
7 put exactly that in place.

8                   And what I hope that OCHCO will do for us in terms of  
9 environmental scan is gather that information that exists at office level, shore  
10 up that information, the quality of that information so we have some confidence  
11 in the environmental scan, and then use that environmental scan not in just  
12 the people that we need, but also the timelines, the resources that we ask for  
13 and everything else that governs our work. So that's my commitment to you.

14                   With regard to the skills and when we have them available,  
15 we are trying to do something short term right now, a polling of folk to  
16 understand everybody who has any kind of qualifications and what those  
17 qualifications are. We intend to put those in TMS, in our Training -- Talent  
18 Management System, so that it's very clear who's qualified to do what. And  
19 going forward we will keep those credentials archived in TMS.

20                   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay. Thank you.

21                   Last question: Mirela, almost a year ago at this meeting, I  
22 expressed concerns to your predecessor regarding workload management.  
23 And the Agency conducted a Jam where workload management was one of  
24 the top issues that employees are concerned about. Coming out of that there

1 was a working group which held a collection of meetings. And as I  
2 understand it, the remaining action is merely to revise guidance on how to use  
3 the add/shed/defer process.

4                   Considering the ADVANCE Act's emphasis on efficiency  
5 and expectations for a growing workload, what actions are you planning to  
6 take to actually shed low-priority work and make sure that we are able to  
7 handle the incoming workload?

8                   MS. GAVRILAS: So the first step is going to be to  
9 understand what kind of work people are doing. And while I'm aware that  
10 there are pockets that are extremely stressed because of the work on their  
11 plates, I'm also aware that there are pockets where we actually have capacity.  
12 So what we need to understand is match the expertise that's available to the  
13 activities that are going on and actually apply the hierarchy of urgency.  
14 What's a more -- a higher priority item versus a lower priority item to be able  
15 to reassign work.

16                   We're not there yet. We're working on it. We're trying to  
17 get our arms around everybody's workload, what they're working on and  
18 where those assignments fit in the prioritization scheme. That's where we're  
19 going.

20                   I'm not even -- you know, I don't want to over-promise and  
21 under-deliver because I'm not sure that we have yet the tools in place to do a  
22 comprehensive look at the Agency, but we're starting with the larger projects,  
23 the ones that are 4 FTE and up. And then we're going to successively lower  
24 the bar to have an understanding of what work is going on and what priority it



1 is.

2 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So NEIMA directed the  
3 Agency to estimate, or at least provide a budget estimate for all the requested  
4 activities, which basically encompasses all of our licensing work. And within  
5 our budget, that estimate equals eight percent of the Agency's total budget.  
6 So I would encourage you in terms of looking at people's workload and where  
7 those pockets might be for folks that are overloaded, to focus on licensing in  
8 particular.

9 MS. GAVRILAS: Will do.

10 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Because that obviously is  
11 our primary statutory mandate. Thank you.

12 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Commissioner Crowell?

13 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
14 Thank you to all of our panelists. This has been a great meeting and briefing.  
15 And usually I worry about going last, but I'm going to talk a little bit more than  
16 I normally do today. And then most of my questions are going to be curve  
17 balls, not gotchas, but just a little bit out of left field. So be prepared for that.

18 You know, this is an important meeting. I mean, there's a  
19 reason why we do it, you know, twice a year, basically, because this is where  
20 Agency culture starts. And it's -- you know there's always room to -- I just  
21 think we need to frame all the things we do in this area in a positive light  
22 because that's how we're going to have the most success. There are things  
23 we could do better, but we need to be presenting ourselves as an agency that  
24 has unity and sense of purpose and family. And that's going to be one of our

1 biggest recruitment and retention tools going forward, particularly in a perhaps  
2 even more complex hiring environment going forward.

3 On DEI we've got some bright spots and we've got places  
4 we can do better, but, you know, I would note that I'm very proud of the NRC  
5 for having a woman as our executive director, the only -- the second one I  
6 think in our Agency's history. And Mirela's success in that regard is very  
7 important to, you know, the Commissioners personally, but also to the Agency,  
8 you know, in the bigger picture.

9 Rich, you're going to get -- it's just not fair for you to -- but  
10 here you are. How long have you been at the Agency?

11 MR. REVZAN: How long?

12 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yeah.

13 MR. REVZAN: One year, yesterday.

14 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay. Great. Happy  
15 birthday.

16 MR. REVZAN: Thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: What's your background?

18 MR. REVZAN: So most of my background is in HR at TSA,  
19 the Transportation Security Administration --

20 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Oh, okay. Okay.

21 MR. REVZAN: -- and other accepted service agencies.  
22 So I started there in 2003 and was at Department of Justice before that in  
23 grant management, criminal justice, that type of thing.

24 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Well, welcome. I hope the

1 first year has been good and that you'll continue to stick around. You know,  
2 it's the skill set that you have that probably, you know, worries me somewhat  
3 the most when we think about our hiring challenges and strategic hiring needs.

4                   When I first got to the NRC, it seemed that we did a lot of  
5 shuffling of -- or reprogramming of science and technical folks, engineering  
6 folks into HR specialists and things like that. And that's okay to do. I mean,  
7 I applaud our ability to do that, but it's not, you know, when we get an  
8 opportunity to hire from the get-go, our ability to -- you know, I don't think we  
9 need a Strategic Workforce Plan to tell us now that we need to do more and  
10 better hiring in this, you know, support services, all the things that most of you  
11 guys do, and we need to continue with that. We need to keep that in mind,  
12 that we need to hire those people that are the backbone of the Agency that  
13 make the place run, not just the science and engineering folks who work on  
14 licensing projects.

15                   The Strategic Workforce Plan mid-next year, you said? So,  
16 before we potentially would meet for the midyear meeting on this topic?

17                   MR. REVZAN: Right. So, when I say it's going to be  
18 ready --

19                   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yeah.

20                   MR. REVZAN: We'll be able to brief out, keep you all  
21 informed on our progress along the way. I'm just saying full implementation  
22 early summer, June 2025. But taking into account budget cycles and making  
23 sure that the right budgeting forecasting and the wedges that are needed  
24 inside the budgets are going to be there and working with the budget offices

1 as well, the budget director.

2 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Are you at all -- you can  
3 pass this off to someone who -- to Mirela or Vonna or whomever here, but are  
4 you thinking about, or are you concerned that the Strategic Workforce Plan  
5 with the timing for mid-next year will have issues if new hiring challenges arise  
6 in the coming administration in terms of, you know, constraints on hiring or  
7 freezes or other things? Like, how are we going to adopt what may be to  
8 come on this front with our strategic plan?

9 MR. REVZAN: That is certainly a risk we need to address  
10 collectively. It's something that we've talked about internally within OCHCO  
11 to say, okay, what if this, what if that? It's very hard to tell and it could be  
12 another extreme challenge, yes --

13 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay.

14 MR. REVZAN: -- depending on which direction the  
15 incoming administration wants to take.

16 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And maybe have to be  
17 done on the backdrop of increased attrition as well, so we're going to have to  
18 be --

19 MR. REVZAN: That's correct.

20 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: -- very mindful.

21 MR. REVZAN: We're also in retirement season. This is  
22 the retirement surge. So we'll get a better handle on, you know, right now  
23 how many applications we have. When we're looking at attrition rate rise, in  
24 the past two years at least, it's all been slightly under the government average

1 of about 700 -- or 700 -- sorry -- 7.5 percent attrition rate. And so it was 208-  
2 ish this past year and it was, like, 200 the year before. So that's kind of  
3 stabilized in the lines, but we're going to take a look. And we always see --  
4 have the number of retirement packages, for example, gone up? Are we  
5 going to expect more, you know, given whatever challenges may come later  
6 on.

7 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Got it. Yeah, and then I'll  
8 just remind everyone for where we are now, which is you can only expect so  
9 much out of a Strategic Hiring or Workforce Plan when a lot of our planning is  
10 based on information we get from our current or prospective licensees and  
11 applicants and how accurate that is and how much their plans stay the same  
12 or are different. So, you know, oftentimes it's an moving target that we -- it's  
13 not something within our control or our fault or necessarily an even negative if  
14 they're mismatched.

15 Mirela?

16 MS. GAVRILAS: That's why the environmental scan is so  
17 important because the environmental scan lends some creditability to the  
18 predictions that we have with regard to when the workload is coming. So it's  
19 a process, right? Environment scan using the information that we have from  
20 applicants and licensees and then developing our workload projection from  
21 that.

22 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yeah, great. I'm going to  
23 switch topics here a little bit. Someone casually asked me recently, and I  
24 thought it was a great question -- you know, it's easy to, you know, criticize an

1 agency for what they're not doing or could do better, but it's hard to say what  
2 are they doing wrong. Someone asked me what does the NRC do really well  
3 compared to my prior experiences? And I said that's a great question. I  
4 thought about it a little bit and then I thought about it a lot.

5                   And two things came quickly to mind: One, the NRC is full  
6 of incredibly dedicated hard workers. I mean, I've worked in other federal  
7 agencies: state level, federal level agencies, and usually there's always  
8 exceptions where you can see someone floating along or not pulling their fair  
9 share. But I haven't experienced that or seen that at the NRC.

10                   And then the other thing that I'd note is that our commitment  
11 to doing the Culture Team stuff and the DEI stuff. That's all, you know,  
12 extracurricular volunteer time, so to speak, but we do a more expansive and  
13 representative job in those areas than I've seen in my past experiences. And  
14 we have a pretty high participation rate, although we should always be going  
15 for more.

16                   And that's a long way of getting around to me asking Erin a  
17 question. I saw you earlier this week in Region I, so good to see you again.  
18 You're an engineering branch chief in a region. Why are you at this table?

19                   MS. CARFANG: I think it's Region I's turn, but --

20                   (Laughter.)

21                   MS. CARFANG: But no, but it's -- I am here because I am  
22 one of the leads for recruiting in the regions. Prior to this actually I was a  
23 branch chief for the New York resident sites, and I had vacancies in my branch  
24 for four years. My last act before I turned over was to fill that last job.

1                   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So how does a branch  
2 chief become a recruitment --

3                   MS. CARFANG: Well --

4                   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And how do you square  
5 that with your branch chief responsibilities?

6                   MS. CARFANG: So that's an extracurricular duty, but it's  
7 really important because I need to make sure the Inspection Program gets  
8 accomplished. I need inspectors. It takes a long time to get them ready, just  
9 like licensee -- license reviewers. So, it's really important for us to look ahead  
10 and say, hey, what do I think I'm going to need? And it's -- and this is one of  
11 the things that I'm concerned about is that almost half my branch in my new  
12 job can retire any day.

13                   And so how do I make sure, right -- I was one of the leads  
14 for making sure we had those individual postings for the different regions.  
15 Let's make sure we have a way to reach all these people using the platforms.  
16 That virtual platform reached across the country to places we had never seen.  
17 We heard calls from people in Utah. We didn't go to Utah, for example, right?  
18 So we're getting diversity in a different -- a number of different ways for this.

19                   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So are your efforts specific  
20 to your branch in Region I or you're doing it for Region I-wide?

21                   MS. CARFANG: Region I-wide.

22                   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay.

23                   MS. CARFANG: But I had seven branch chiefs help me.  
24 In every one of these we had the technical staff because it's an all-in effort for

1 the Agency.

2 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yeah, and I mean -- and  
3 this is fantastic. Also just wonder whether there should be someone that's  
4 dedicated to doing this rather than having it be an add-on to their current job.  
5 You've got enough on your plate, and as do many other people. And so we  
6 need to think about how far we can stretch this, you know, volunteerism, so to  
7 speak, in culture and hiring efforts. I know I'm running out of time, so I'm not  
8 going to let you answer that today, but we could talk about it more later.

9 Hal, my last question is for you, even though I have others I  
10 wish I had time to ask. We need to get our social media numbers up in terms  
11 of our followers and things like that, and that's just something that takes time.  
12 And I know all the things you're doing will result in all that. But is there -- as  
13 we look at impressions and engagements we get from our posts across  
14 various social media platforms, is there any way to determine the  
15 demographics of those that we're reaching and to see if we're preaching to  
16 the choir, if there's a sub-population that we're missing that we should target  
17 some of our efforts to? I don't even know if social media allows for that kind  
18 of information, but --

19 MR. PITTMAN: Yeah, I think that's tough. Just  
20 understanding, you know, the different demographics that we're hitting with  
21 each individual post. I mean, you know, we have -- I think the way that we  
22 hit all cylinders is to continue to increase the number of followers that we have  
23 on every platform, right? That's the way that we can ensure that we're hitting  
24 a better cross-section of different groups of stakeholders.



1 I also think that, you know, tying social media activity to  
2 certain engagements that we have in different parts of the country, you know,  
3 looking at regional demographics and regional type of engagements, making  
4 sure that we're doing that will help us get some additional followers. And, you  
5 know, it's -- I think it's challenging, but the content obviously -- people are  
6 looking for a certain type of content. As I mentioned earlier, our diversity-  
7 focused content is some of our highest performing content.

8 So I think, you know, to your point, we may be preaching to  
9 the choir to some degree or --

10 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I mean, I know when I  
11 repost NRC posts, the diversity and the recruitment stuff get the most traction  
12 as well.

13 MR. PITTMAN: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So, you know, we all have  
15 a -- kind of our own kind of duty to, you know, circulate those things and get  
16 them going. But it will take time. And I appreciate your leadership in this  
17 regard and all you're doing in that area. And I will digress from there. So,  
18 thank you.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

20 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Crowell. I'd  
21 now like to recognize and welcome Sheryl Sanchez representing National  
22 Treasury Employees Union for her remarks. Sheryl?

23 MS. SANCHEZ: Good morning, Chair Hanson,  
24 Commissioners, managers, and most importantly bargaining unit employees.

1 The vast majority, over 70 percent of NRC employees, are in the bargaining  
2 unit, and without them we would not be able to fulfill our mission.

3 I am Sheryl Sanchez, President of NTEU Chapter 208, and  
4 I'm pleased to be here to provide the union's remarks this morning.

5 NTEU Chapter 208 is the exclusive representative of  
6 bargaining unit employees at the NRC. I'm joined here in the room and  
7 virtually by many NTEU team members who work every day for bargaining  
8 unit members such as stewards, labor partners, bargaining team members,  
9 and elected officers. Without such a dedicated team, NTEU would not be  
10 able to work together to ensure that every NRC employee is treated with  
11 dignity and respect.

12 This EEO Commission briefing should reflect both  
13 discrimination grievances and EEO complaints -- should reflect that  
14 grievances and EEO complaints both measure employee dissatisfaction  
15 regarding discrimination and harassment. In cases of alleged discrimination  
16 or harassment, an employee can either file a grievance under the collective  
17 bargaining agreement or file an EEO complaint, but not both.

18 A complaint begins with the claim of agency wrongdoing, for  
19 example, promotion, non-selection, or low appraisal. After that is  
20 substantiated, the complaint must prove the reason for the agency's  
21 inappropriate action is due to illegal discrimination. The latter is most difficult  
22 to prove, with many employees choosing to only seek the remedy for the  
23 agency's wrongdoing by using a union-supported filed grievance.

24 Many grievances could be associated with illegal

1 discrimination and could be a more accurate indicator of workplace problems,  
2 especially those cases where the grievance deciding official grants the  
3 requested remedy. Thus, for the Commission to get a true and accurate  
4 picture of problems and employee dissatisfaction, this meeting should report  
5 on both EEO complaints and grievances.

6 In looking at the five-year trend analysis of employees  
7 leaving the Agency, for the current year, as you said, telework dissatisfaction  
8 was number two, and it was number one for the prior two years. Employees  
9 will continue to leave the Agency until the Agency gets the message that  
10 telework is work and denials should receive more scrutiny when the work is  
11 truly portable.

12 The current year is not over yet. Many employees retire at  
13 the end of the calendar year, so the information is not complete for 2024.  
14 Additionally, with the way the calendar falls this year, employees who retire in  
15 early 2025; for example, the Friday, January 3rd, they really are losses for  
16 2024, but they won't be counted until 2025.

17 Many employees have told me they're leaving late this year  
18 or early next year, including, sadly, some of our top NTEU team members. I  
19 will be curious to see the final numbers for 2024 and 2025, which could  
20 potentially show more losses than gains. Despite the robust hiring, the net  
21 gain considering new hires and departures may be zero or negative.

22 We lost 264 employees in 2023, 305 in 2022, and 246 in  
23 2021. Employees are not just retiring. Employees are leaving for other jobs  
24 and quite a few employees who are retiring post-and minimum retirement age

1 are telling NTEU that they really would have preferred to work until 62. So  
2 that's not a retirement; that's an attrition.

3 We have a serious attrition problem. The majority of  
4 departing employees do not indicate the reasons for their separation to agency  
5 officials. Departing employees report to NTEU that it's because they don't  
6 feel valued by the Agency, they're discouraged with the Agency culture, and  
7 they don't believe the Agency will use the information to make changes.

8 Our 2023 FEVS score of 23 -- of 26 mid-sized agencies is  
9 below the bottom 12 percent. It indicates that there's also a morale problem  
10 at the NRC. This is the lowest FEVS score we've ever seen. I'm hoping  
11 there's nowhere to go but up from here. Now, I did understand that we made  
12 a small improvement this year, but we need to do better.

13 Our bargaining unit employees are dedicated, highly-skilled  
14 civil servants and it's heartbreaking that many do not feel valued. Our low  
15 FEVS scores are in no way a reflection on the staff, but rather a reflection on  
16 how they feel about the agency culture, decisions made, and policies in place.

17 I understand that in many, or even most cases, happy  
18 employees do not come to the union. Employees who have stated they feel  
19 -- employees have stated to us that they feel like a box of pens. I'm a box of  
20 pens. I'm a commodity. If they could get a cheaper box of pens, I'd be out  
21 and they'd get the cheaper box of pens. They also say that the Agency  
22 doesn't know who to value, that if you're beloved and a yes person, you'll get  
23 everything the Agency has to offer and more. But if you're not, don't let the  
24 door hit you on the way out.

1                   Such statements are troubling to hear. Sometimes it is not  
2 reality, but employees' perceptions that impact attrition and morale. A recent  
3 example of this is the ADVANCE Act. Two provisions in particular concern  
4 our employees. The first is direct hire authority. Employees are concerned  
5 that the Agency will bypass qualified internal candidates for promotions and  
6 that external candidates will have an advantage over existing NRC  
7 employees. Many direct hire postings lack the required OPM provision to be  
8 hard to fill.

9                   Employees are also concerned about the repeated  
10 emphasis on efficiency, and they're worried that this will lead to them being  
11 pushed to provide reviews faster, possibly at the cost of quality. These  
12 employees say that they will not be pressured to do reviews in less time than  
13 is required to make a solid safety decision and they will just leave if they are  
14 pressured to do so.

15                   The solution to this reality versus perception problem is  
16 transparency, so that even if employees do not agree with a particular decision  
17 or policy, they will understand how the Agency came to their position.  
18 Employees want fairness and a level playing field. They want management  
19 that follows through on what they commit to.

20                   As I've said many times, NRC employees are amazing,  
21 some of the best in the Federal Government as well as outside of the Federal  
22 Government. It should be this fact that gives us hope. If we work together,  
23 we can turn around our current trends and rise out of the apparent slump we  
24 are in, but we need to focus on all that we are and what we could be.

1                   For those of you who are members of the bargaining unit,  
2 you are fortunate to have a dedicated union team who works for you every  
3 day to protect your rights. Most employees are aware that we've been very  
4 active lately with partnerships, bargaining, hoteling agreements, grievances,  
5 arbitrations, and anything that comes our way that impacts your working  
6 conditions.

7                   In times of change it is more important than ever to stay  
8 grounded in the purpose, history, and power of our union. We build our union  
9 on the foundation of fair treatment, the collective process, and commitment to  
10 protect the dignity, stability, and well-being of every federal worker.

11                  Chapter 208 was preparing for potential workplace  
12 challenges the day after the November 5th election. We will not simply wait  
13 and see what happens. We are active right now. Our union gives us power  
14 that we do not possess individually. I encourage those who are in the  
15 bargaining unit to recognize and be grateful for the great benefit and protection  
16 being a member affords you.

17                  Alongside our Chapter 208 team, our NTEU National Office  
18 is staffed with experts who are advocating for your workplace rights on Capitol  
19 Hill and in the courtroom. Do not underestimate the power of this combined  
20 team. Recognize that our employees benefit now more than ever from our  
21 organization. We are working to lock down as many protections as we can,  
22 including working on appeal rights for employees who may be impacted by  
23 Schedule F. We have allies on the Hill and we are recruiting more.

24                  For those of you who have not been active and supportive

1 of your union, I encourage you to look at ways to be more active. There is  
2 great strength in numbers. You can add to our strength.

3                   And this is off script but let me say before closing -- let me  
4 say it more clearly: For those of you who do not actively support your union,  
5 please go back and give this some serious consideration because you need  
6 us now more than ever.

7                   And I will make another pitch, a public service  
8 announcement. Join your office partnerships. Offices meet with labor every  
9 month. We meet with management every month. Get more involved.  
10 Thank you for your attention. And Dale is going to be handing out hard copies  
11 of the CBA. If anybody would like one, come to the union office and get one.  
12 Thank you.

13                   CHAIR HANSON: Okay. We have reached the end of our  
14 time together this morning. Thank you to all of our presenters. It's great to  
15 have you here.

16                   Thank you to everyone who's joined us in the room and  
17 online. Thanks to my colleagues for your thoughtful remarks and insightful  
18 questions as always. With that, we are adjourned.

19                   (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record  
20 at 11:52 a.m.)