UNITED STATES

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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BRIEFING ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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TUESDAY,

JUNE 17, 2025

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The Commission met in the Commissioners' Hearing Room, at 10:00 a.m. EDT, David A. Wright, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Chairman

ANNIE CAPUTO, Commissioner

BRADLEY R. CROWELL, Commissioner

MATTHEW J. MARZANO, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT:

TOMAS HERRERA, Acting Secretary of the Commission

BROOKE P. CLARK, General Counsel

NRC STAFF:

MIRELA GAVRILAS, Executive Director for Operations

JENNIFER GOLDER, Chief Human Capital Officer, Office of the Chief
 Human Capital Officer (OCHCO)

CAROLINE CARUSONE, Deputy Director, Office of the Chief Information
 Office (OCIO)

JEFF GRIFFIS, Chief, Leaning Innovation and Support Branch, OCHCO

MATTHEW MEYER, Senior Advisor, OCHCO

ANGELA RANDALL, Senior Management Analyst, OCHCO

MOHAMMED SHUAIBI, Deputy Regional Administrator, Region III

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

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3   10:00 a.m.

4   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Good morning, everyone. I call

5   this meeting to order, today's public meeting of the Nuclear Regulatory

6   Commission. We're going to have the opportunity to hear about the NRC's

7   Human Capital and Equal Employment Opportunity Programs.

8   While our licensing and oversight work gets most of the

9   focus in these meetings, it's the people who work here that make the work

10 possible and who make the NRC such a great place. As we work to

11 become a leaner, more mission-focused agency, there will be personnel and

12 organizational changes ahead of us, I'm sure. But -- and I've said it

13 before -- no one is asking us to compromise safety at all.

14   There is much work to do towards making meaningful

15 progress and improving the time it takes to hire and making sure we retain

16 the best people. Today, I'm looking forward to hearing about the steps the

17 agency is taking to provide a place where people are passionate about our

18 safety mission.

19   So, before we begin, this is the last Commission meeting

20 at the NRC for our EDO, Dr. Mirela Gavrilas. And I'll have more to say

21 about you later.

22   And with that, I would like to offer my colleagues a chance

23 to make opening remarks if they so choose.

24   Okay. Commissioner Caputo.

25   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, Mirela, thank you for

1   your service. You have continually led positive change in the agency by

2   implementing the ADVANCE Act, furthering risk-informed regulation, and

3   improving efficiency. Your distinguished career has been marked by many

4   accomplishments, including the Be RiskSMART decision-making framework.

5   However, your efforts to implement modern project

6   management and strategic workforce planning agency-wide are positioning

7   the agency to improve how it executes its mission and navigates the

8   changes ahead. It is easy to talk about change, but you have demonstrated

9   how to get it done.

10   I will miss your insightful leadership, and I will always

11   appreciate your tireless dedication to the agency. I am sorry to see you go,

12   but I wish you all the best in your retirement.

13   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Thank you so much.

14   And, with that, I'm going to turn things over to you, Mirela.

15   MS. GAVRILAS: Thank you. Good morning. We are

16   going to take the opportunity today to not just talk about human capital and

17   EEO, but we are also going to introduce the project that Commissioner

18   Caputo just mentioned, our Project Management Initiative. And like the

19   Commissioner mentioned, it is going to be an essential tool for the agency,

20   as our anticipated workload is expected to increase.

21   And, with that, I'm going to pass the microphone to

22   Jennifer Golder, who is going to introduce the Panel.

23   MS. GOLDER: Thank you, Mirela.

24   Chairman Wright, Commissioners, thank you for the

25   opportunity to brief you today on the NRC's Human Capital Management

1   Program.

2   Next slide, please. I'm going to briefly discuss human

3   capital data and initiatives we have taken to enhance human capital

4   practices, including knowledge transfer. Further, I'll discuss our efforts to

5   improve our time to hire in alignment with the administration's Merit Hiring

6   Plan.

7   Caroline Carusone will cover the agency's Project

8   Management Initiative, which will enable more informed decision-making and

9   improve project management discipline and accountability of workload and

10   agency resources.

11   Matthew Meyer will discuss the new strategic workforce

12   planning process that will be used to plan for and address workforce gaps

13   through use of tools and data.

14   Angela Randall will discuss our efforts to centralize agency

15   qualification programs and tracking staff qualifications through use of

16   employee profiles. These profiles will include qualifications, expertise, and

17   experience, helping managers identify specialized staff, reduce training time

18   through cross-qualifications, and ensure our workforce is prepared to meet

19   the agency's needs.

20   Jeff Griffis will provide an update on training and

21   modernization efforts that will save resources while enabling faster time to

22   qualification and competency.

23   And Mohammed Shuaibi, the final presenter, will highlight

24   how the regions work across the agency to utilize resources to ensure

25   mission success.

1   Next slide, please.   This slide highlights separations in

2   agency attrition by fiscal year.   The left axis represents number of losses,

3   and the right axis represents percentage.   The attrition number and rate

4   include actual losses as of June 3rd, as well as known and anticipated

5   separations through the end of the fiscal year.

6   To date, 187 employees have separated through the NRC,

7   primarily through retirement, transfer, or resignation.   An additional 34

8   individuals who opted in to the deferred resignation program will be leaving

9   by September 30th, and the remaining 75 will be leaving by December 31st.

10   To date, an additional 69 people are projected to leave the agency either

11   through planned retirement outside of the deferred resignation program or

12   for other opportunities.

13   Therefore, as of today, we are projecting that 291 people

14   will separate from the NRC with an attrition rate of approximately 10.8

15   percent in Fiscal Year 2025, which is an increase from previous years.

16   To date, the NRC has onboarded 105 new employees

17   since the beginning of the fiscal year, which is a decrease from 2024 by

18   approximately 172.   NRC remains in a hiring freeze with limited exceptions.

19   Each exception must be approved by the Executive Director for Operations

20   or Commission, show that the position is mission critical, and be aligned with

21   the list that was submitted to and approved by the Office of Personnel

22   Management.   The position must be fully funded and also align with the

23   agency's strategic workforce plans.

24   As of early June, three vacancies have been posted,

25   including Project Engineer for the Regional Resident Inspector Development

1   Program, the Senior Resident Inspector at seven sites, and Nuclear Systems

2   Engineer or Scientist for the Headquarters Operations Officer or

3   Headquarters Emergency Response Officer positions.

4   We are refocusing knowledge transfer activities to fully

5   prepare and support employees for the future anticipated work by

6   emphasizing the importance of knowledge transfer throughout one's career,

7   not just at the end.   And we are ensuring employees have awareness of and

8   easy access to authoritative data sources, including laws, regulations, staff

9   requirement memos, management directives, office instructions, and

10   standard operating procedures. We're also developing employee profiles,

11   which is a knowledge tool that Angie will talk about further during her

12   presentation.

13   Lastly, per 42 U.S. Code 5849, Part C, the Executive

14   Director shall report to the Commission at semiannual public meetings on

15   the problems, progress, and status of the Commission's equal employment

16   opportunity efforts.   Over the first half of Fiscal Year 2025, the NRC

17   achieved a complaint resolution rate of 73 percent. The staff tracks and

18   analyzes complaint data to identify problems, guide improvements, and

19   support compliance with federal law. Analysis of complaint data indicates

20   the number of complaints has been fairly stable for the past ten years. The

21   number of individuals who have filed complaints represents under 1 percent

22   of the total population of the agency.

23   Next slide, please. As you can see from the slide, the

24   agency has struggled to hire and onboard new employees in a timely

25   manner and within the OPM target of 80 days for agencies. In 2023, our

1   average time to hire was 159 days, and in 2024, our average time to hire

2   was 137 days.

3   Earlier this year, we conducted an assessment of our

4   current time-to-hire process, and we have implemented several

5   recommendations that create efficiencies and reduce time, including setting

6   clear metrics for each step of the hiring process, eliminating duplicative

7   steps, automating applicants' screening, eliminating rating panels,

8   streamlining the security clearance process, and training HR staff to ensure

9   they provide consistent messaging.

10   We also created a tool to ensure transparency and

11   accountability for hiring managers and HR specialists throughout the

12   process. The efficiencies we have implemented dovetail with Executive

13   Order 14170 on Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit

14   to Government Services and the new Merit Hiring Plan guidance from the

15   Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and the Acting Director of the

16   Office of Personnel Management.

17   The Merit Hiring Plan further improves the hiring process.

18   For example, length of résumés will be kept to two pages, skills-based

19   assessments will be used, and hiring managers will evaluate candidates

20   based on the relative ability, skills, and knowledge using a numeric rating

21   system.

22   All of these tools and adjustments will position the NRC to

23   be able to meet the OPM 80-day hiring target. We are awaiting further

24   information from OPM and details and tools for -- as we continue to

25   implement.

1   I'll now turn the presentation to Caroline Carusone, who

2   will highlight the Project Management Initiative.

3   You can turn to the next slide, please.

4   MS. CARUSONE: Thank you, Jennifer.

5   Good morning, Chairman and Commissioners.   Can you

6   hear me okay?

7   Thank you for being here today.   I appreciate the

8   opportunity to share an update on some critical initiatives that impact how we

9   work and how we manage our workforce here at the agency.   As today's

10   meeting is focused on human capital, I want to speak about the agency's

11   Project Management Initiative to set some broader context for what we've

12   currently embarked on and where we are today.

13   Human capital and workforce management is directly

14   driven by the work we do and how we do it.   That's why it's essential that we

15   align our people, processes, and data to deliver our mission with maximum

16   impact.   We must evolve our organizational mindset around project

17   management to truly embrace industry best practices.   This shift means not

18   only adapting proven methods but also fostering a culture that prioritizes

19   data in our decision-making.

20   By capturing and using data effectively, we can enhance

21   transparency, accountability, and ultimately the success of our projects.   It's

22   about moving from intuition to insights, where data isn't just a byproduct of

23   our work but a critical tool that informs every step we take.

24   Next slide, please.   The Program Management Initiative

25   that Jennifer mentioned in her remarks integrates data and business

1 management practices across multiple areas, including workload

2 management, program and project management, and strategic workforce

3 planning. The goal is to optimize our operations and apply our resources to

4 the right focus areas so we can enable energy security, achieve our safety

5 and security mission, and ultimately deliver value to the American people.

6   Next slide, please. A key part of these efforts is improving

7 discipline and accountability and tracking and reporting data and

8 democratizing it, ensuring everyone has the information they need to make

9 informed decisions. The graphics shown here and on the following slides

10 are illustrative examples of the types of dashboards and data tools we're

11 building. While the details may be hard to see, the key point is that they

12 reflect our vision for greater transparency enabled by stronger data discipline

13 and improved analytics.

14   As part of workload management, we've developed

15 easy-to-use dashboards that allow all managers and staff across the agency

16 to see where time and resources are being applied. This gives us the ability

17 to scrutinize how time is spent and set an expectation that 80 percent of an

18 employee's time should be attributed to work that can be actively managed

19 and where outputs can be articulated.

20   For example, let's say you're a licensing reviewer and you

21 spend hours in meetings or tangential activities that aren't directly tied to

22 licensing casework. These tools help us see how time is being spent and

23 prompts us to ask whether that's the best use of time.

24   Next slide, please. The work the NRC takes on and the

25 projects staff are executing must be aligned with the budget, which reflects

1   the approved priorities for the Commission and the agency. Since budget

2   formulation happens two years out, it's crucial we mature our implementation

3   process to support performance, budgeting, and execution.

4   Beyond our licensing and inspection work, we also spend

5   significant resources on activities and projects to support our mission. We

6   need to manage these with the same rigor and transparency as our

7   casework. For example, developing new guidance documents or improving

8   our IT systems should be diligently managed.

9   We're working towards applying resources to projects and

10   activities that are approved, scoped, and tracked for project management.

11   We're also applying a common prioritization schema to create a baseline for

12   assessing work across the agency. Different types of work naturally vary in

13   priority, but this helps us make informed decisions.

14   This visibility allows us to reassign staff, where capacity

15   exists, to higher-priority work. For the first time, we're building an

16   enterprise-wide inventory of work. Many managers know what their teams

17   are doing, but no one has a full picture on what is going on across the

18   agency. This makes cross-organizational transfers and resource-sharing

19   challenging, and that's what we're aiming to fix.

20   Next slide, please. We're also working to forecast known

21   work so we can plan the right labor force in terms of head count, skills, and

22   specialties to meet future needs. The inventory of staff, skills, and

23   specialties now and in the future, along with the work that will draw upon

24   these skills, is paramount. You'll hear more on this later.

25   Once we identify and prioritize the work that matters most,

1   we must then execute this work effectively.   To facilitate this, we're

2   implementing more rigorous program and project management.   For

3   example, in a licensing review for a fuel facility, we might need a nuclear

4   engineer, a fuel facility inspector, a criticality reviewer, and other specialties.

5   Different projects require different skill sets, and it's important that we

6   anticipate and plan for any gaps that may arise.

7   We're also emphasizing governance and accountability by

8   ensuring that every project has a baseline resource model and that both

9   leading and lagging indicators are established.   Leading indicators help us

10   detect potential risks early, allowing us to take proactive measures before

11   issues escalate.   At the same time, lagging indicators help us measure past

12   performance and learn from experience.   The increased attention on leading

13   indicators will be key moving forward to ensure we don't find ourselves in

14   situations where we're discovering problems after they've already impacted

15   outcomes.

16   For non-casework activities, we're setting the expectation

17   that each project has a clear business case that outlines its outputs and

18   intended benefits.   This must be aligned with the executive leadership to

19   avoid the challenge where everyone feels their work is the most important

20   activity or project.   We're also establishing business rules and best practices

21   to help staff at all levels of the organization understand what is expected,

22   including mandatory data capture and compliance with project-tracking

23   requirements.   This ensures work is assigned with clear scope, level of

24   effort, and deadlines so it doesn't expand to fill time available.

25   Transparency is key.   It allows us to discuss and align on

1   the why behind the work we do. We're setting expectations around

2   establishing milestones and tracking planned versus actual expenditures

3   with visibility for project managers, Branch Chiefs, and senior leaders.

4   These will be reported quarterly and tied to our performance metrics.

5   In addition, internal and external communication, including

6   with customers and licensees, is essential for sound project management

7   because it ensures everyone is aligned on expectations, requirements, and

8   objectives. Clear and consistent communication builds trust, reduces

9   misunderstandings, and allows us to identify and mitigate risks early in the

10   process. Ultimately, effective communication fosters collaboration and

11   transparency, which are key to delivering projects on time, within budget,

12   and with highest quality.

13   As with any organization, our project management

14   expertise varies, so we're providing training to ensure staff meet

15   requirements under the Program Management Improvement Accountability

16   Act. To date, we've completed four cohort trainings and will continue

17   building on that in the coming months. Angie Randall will talk about training

18   and qualifications a little more this morning.

19   We're also incorporating performance objectives into staff

20   performance plans at all levels to ensure clarity and traceability between

21   budget priorities, the work we execute, and how we execute it. This

22   reinforces our commitment to shared purpose and accountability.

23   Again, much of this is about democratizing the data, which

24   helps us be curious, ask questions, and challenge assumptions. This

25   mindset allows us to make better decisions and apply our resources to work

1   that aligns with our mission, the ADVANCE Act, and the executive orders.

2   Finally, at every level of the agency, workload, program,

3   and project management rely on our communication with our customers,

4   both internal and external.   We are each other's customers, and

5   understanding one another's perspectives is critical to delivering meaningful

6   outcomes.

7   The activities underway as part of the agency's Project

8   Management Initiative are essential to ensure we focus on the most critical

9   work, deliver and execute on that work, and provide data and visibility

10 needed to inform continuous monitoring, review, and adjustment of our

11 budget execution.

12   With that, I'll hand it over to Matt.

13   MR. MEYER: Thank you, Caroline.

14   Good morning, Chairman Wright, Commissioners, and

15 members of the public.   I'm Matthew Meyer.   I'm a Senior Adviser within

16 OCHCO.   I really appreciate this opportunity to update you on our workforce

17 planning efforts.

18   Next slide, please.   I'd like to begin by sharing how our

19 approach to strategic workforce planning starts with a fundamental shift in

20 how we manage our current workforce.   At the heart of this shift is a modern

21 enterprise-wide   workforce   management   application   that   is   under

22 development.   This application replaces our current interface that many of

23 our supervisors and staff have identified as a process inefficiency.

24   Instead of manually tracking down employee data in

25 multiple systems, we'll have a unified, comprehensive employee profile for

1　every staff member in the agency, as Angela Randall will discuss next.　This

2　means we will no longer rely on informal knowledge or anecdotal insights.

3　Our workforce data will be structured, accessible, and complete.

4　　　　　From a business process standpoint, this brings clear

5　benefits.　We can track and monitor processing times for staffing actions,

6　measure bottlenecks in hiring or reassignments, and ensure accountability in

7　workforce transactions.　And just as importantly, this gives our supervisors

8　real-time insights into their employees' capabilities, capacity, and utilization,

9　which supports more strategic decisions about staffing and development.

10　　　　　Next slide, please.　A key to our approach is the use of

11　specialties.　These are defined, discrete areas of knowledge or technical

12　expertise tied to agency work.　Specialties will be the backbone of how we

13　align staff with the work that needs to get done.　Each employee will be

14　associated with one or more specialties based on their qualifications,

15　training, and experience.　These same specialties are mapped to projects

16　and activities, position descriptions, certifications and qualification programs,

17　and job vacancies.

18　　　　　This structure allows us to pinpoint the right people for the

19　right work, regardless of where they sit organizationally.　If a future project

20　requires a specialty in fuel cycle oversight, the system will instantly identify

21　available and qualified employees.　This also improves how we approach

22　external hiring by having refined job postings that reflect the specialties we

23　know we'll need based on our workload forecast.

24　　　　　Ultimately, this enables us to be proactive, not reactive, in

25　managing both our internal workforce and external recruitment strategies.

1   Next slide, please.   Now let's look at how workforce

2   planning will enable forward-looking visibility into projects and activities over

3   the current and future fiscal years.   We're not just inputting named projects.

4   We're also defining general categories of expected work, things like license

5   amendments, allegations, baseline inspections.   Each grouping includes

6   assumptions such as the estimated number of inspections or projected

7   volume of allegations.   These assumptions are tied to the specialties

8   required to execute the work.

9   One of the most important aspects of this effort is the use

10   of a standard set of minimum required data fields for every project and

11   activity.   These fields, such as project name, responsible office, start and

12   end dates, confidence level, specialties, estimated hours, and priority level,

13   allow us to build a consistent and structured project profile.

14   This level of consistency ensures that the data entered in

15   one office can be interpreted, aggregated, and analyzed alongside data from

16   other offices without translation or reconciliation.   This not only improves the

17   quality and comparability of our data, it also strengthens our ability to

18   forecast staffing needs and identify gaps or surpluses.

19   When all projects and activities follow the same structured

20   format, the resulting data can support more reliable modeling, trend analysis,

21   and prioritization.   We also assign a confidence rating to each project based

22   on the likelihood it will materialize.   This helps us differentiate between

23   high-certainty projects and those that are still emerging.

24   Once this data is entered, the system can identify where

25   we have surpluses and gaps in workforce capacity based on both current

1   staffing and anticipated changes.   This gives us a clear view into where we

2   need to cross-train, reassign, contract, or hire.

3   This isn't just planning for planning's sake.   It's a

4   framework for aligning the workforce with a mission grounded in real

5   workload expectations and supported by enterprise-wide data standards.

6   Next slide, please.   This brings us to how we align the

7   forecasting process with the budget formulation and execution cycles.   For

8   the formatted budgets, we're using those assumptions as the baseline for

9   our workload planning.   For future fiscal years, we use the budget

10   formulation process itself to drive early workload estimates.

11   Prior to the start of each fiscal year, we will reevaluate all

12   planned projects and activities.   This allows us to refine assumptions, add

13   greater specificity around timelines, and increase or decrease our

14   confidence ratings based on evolving information.

15   We are also assigning priority rankings using our Add,

16   Shed, Defer process.   This will allow the agency to make responsive

17   decisions when emergent high-priority work arises, such as executive orders

18   or Commission staff requirements memoranda.   By having a prioritized and

19   flexible plan, we can shift resources accordingly while maintaining

20   transparency and control.

21   Next slide, please.   One important feature in the process

22   is the integration of plan versus actual labor hours.   Supervisors will be able

23   to see whether projects are on track based on how staff are allocating their

24   time.   If a project is falling behind or consuming more time than anticipated,

25   corrective actions can be taken early, whether that means reprioritizing work

1   or adjusting resources.

2   We're also introducing new enterprise-level crosscutting

3   activity codes to capture work that has historically gone untracked, things

4   like performance management, hiring, knowledge transfer, and training.   For

5   example, under training, we now differentiate between qualification

6   certification training, refresher training, developmental training, peer-to-peer

7   training, and mandatory training.

8   This level of granularity doesn't just help with transparency;

9   it allows us to forecast the total program cost of these efforts in future

10   budgets.   If we know that knowledge transfer and training are consuming

11   ten percent of our resources in a division, we can plan accordingly, either by

12   reallocating resources or justifying cross-agency support.   This supports a

13   more deliberate and accountable workforce management and budgeting

14   process, one that reflects how the agency operates.

15   Next slide, please.   Our NEXUS application is connected

16   to all authoritative systems across the agency, from human capital to budget

17   to project management.   It not only consumes this data but can also push

18   data back into some of these systems.   This creates an efficient method for

19   viewing workforce, workload, and project data and enables the agency to

20   respond faster to internal and external inquiries.

21   We'll have the ability to produce reports in real time, run

22   predictive models, and conduct scenario analyses.   To ensure success, we

23   are embedding business process discipline and governance throughout the

24   application.   This will improve accountability for entering accurate data,

25   updating the forecast, and participating in regular reviews.

1   In summary, workforce planning at the NRC is evolving

2   into a modern data-driven process supported by an enterprise application

3   that integrates workforce, workload, and project management across the

4   agency.

5   With that, I will turn it over to Angela Randall.   Next slide,

6   please.

7   MS. RANDALL: Thank you, Matthew.

8   Good morning, everyone.   I'm Angela Randall, a Senior

9   Management Analyst in OCHCO.

10   Next slide, please.   Effective in June this year, OCHCO

11   has centralized the tracking of all NRC qualification programs into a new

12   document collection under OCHCO management and oversight.   This

13   risk-informed approach ensures collective oversight by OCHCO while still

14   allowing qualification program owners to maintain control of their individual

15   programs.

16   This shift represents a significant change from how

17   qualifications have previously been managed at the NRC.   Up until now,

18   there was no comprehensive inventory or way for agency leadership to

19   identify staff qualified in various specialties.   Centralization enables

20   agency-wide visibility to all staff qualified in technical, specialized, and

21   administrative areas and allows our employees to easily access information

22   about existing programs and plan their career development accordingly.

23   As part of this initiative, OCHCO developed a governance

24   framework for the creation and management of qualification programs.   We

25   collaborated with the Human Capital Council, or HCC, to establish this

1   governance.   The HCC is a group of agency executives and Deputy Office

2   Director and Deputy Regional Administrator roles whose purpose is to

3   provide enterprise governance for agency-wide human capital goals,

4   strategies, initiatives, and processes, ensuring that human capital programs

5   and policies effectively integrate and align with the agency's mission.

6   The HCC ensured that the governance framework

7   established the appropriate level of standardized required program elements

8   and signature authority commensurate with the responsibilities of the work

9   the qualified staff person will be performing.   The governance also defines

10   roles and responsibilities for the qualification program owners and OCHCO

11   and the methodology used for tracking and maintaining qualifications.

12   Because many agency qualifications share similar

13   programmatic elements, this uniform structure allows qualification programs

14   to be systematically reviewed and compared, enabling a clear understanding

15   of the content, rigor, and scope of each program.   This standardization

16   supports the identification of deltas, differences in required competencies,

17   knowledge, or experience between programs.

18   By analyzing these deltas, the agency can streamline

19   efforts to cross-qualify employees by focusing training and development

20   resources only on the specified gaps.   This facilitates more efficient

21   reallocation of talent during surge activities, supports succession planning,

22   and enhances workforce resilience by enabling qualified staff to move

23   seamlessly across similar mission areas with minimal delay or redundant

24   training.

25   Prior to this centralization, offices independently created

1   and maintained their own qualification programs, resulting in varied

2   structures, tracking methods, and programmatic elements.   While this

3   flexibility allowed offices to tailor programs to their specific needs, it also led

4   to inconsistencies across the agency.

5   This centralization ensures consistency, transparency, and

6   accountability in the development and oversight of qualifications, supporting

7   agency-wide training and operational needs.

8   Next slide, please.   The framework includes monitoring

9   each sign-off for the program content elements in the qualification journal,

10   also referred to as the qualification card, throughout the process.   These

11   elements include self-study materials, on-the-job training, knowledge checks,

12   standards that demonstrate proficiency, and training courses.

13   Additionally, sign-offs where equivalencies are granted for

14   prior knowledge and experience are also tracked.   By tracking the program

15   requirements and the dates achieved by staff, we're able to automate

16   refresher training notifications and tracking, ensuring that staff are taking the

17   required annual training to remain qualified.

18   Additionally, we're now able to measure staff time to

19   proficiency in their programs.   This information is maintained in our NEXUS

20   application, allowing supervisors to clearly see from a workload perspective

21   when their staff will be engaged in qualification activities or taking refresher

22   training.   This centralized approach not only streamlines the tracking

23   process but also enhances the ability of supervisors to manage their teams

24   effectively, ensuring that all staff members remain qualified and up to date

25   with their training requirements.

1   Next slide, please. In addition to tracking qualifications,

2   OCHCO also tracks employee specialties relevant to their qualifications,

3   educational background, and work experience.   This comprehensive

4   aggregation of information for each employee enables leadership to easily

5   identify individuals with specific skill sets and pinpoint gaps in qualified staff

6   due to attrition.

7   Employee profiles capture core data and serve as a

8   matching tool aligning available staff with the specialty and qualification

9   needs of projects and forecasted workloads. This empowers supervisors

10   and project managers to quickly identify staff with the right skills, credentials,

11   and experience to take on upcoming or emergent work.

12   In an environment where efficiency is crucial for completing

13   reviews and technical specialties are spread across various position titles

14   within the agency, the ability to search across employee profiles and identify

15   matches ensures that the right person with the right specialties has the

16   capacity for the upcoming project. This process helps prevent staffing

17   delays and reduces the administrative burden on supervisors who would

18   otherwise need to forage for available staff.

19   The benefits for supervisors and project managers include

20   improved workforce planning by understanding who's qualified and their

21   availability and fostering a culture of mobility and opportunity where

22   employees can be matched with work aligned with their specialties and their

23   expertise.

24   Finally, capturing each employee's work experience

25   provides additional agency-wide benefits in terms of knowledge transfer. It

1   helps leaders and staff quickly find subject-matter expertise for specific

2   projects, answer project questions, and leverage best practices for similar

3   projects.

4   I'll now turn the presentation over to Jeff Griffis.   Next

5   slide, please.

6   MR. GRIFFIS: Thank you, Angela.   And good morning,

7   everyone.   My name is Jeff Griffis, and I'm a Branch Chief in our Division of

8   Human Resources' Learning and Development within OCHCO.   I would like

9   to share some of the ways that we are streamlining and modernizing our

10 training programs to meet the demands of current and future staff.

11   Next slide, please.   One of the most important things we

12 do is train and qualify NRC staff to successfully perform their jobs.   With that

13 focus in mind, we are proactively looking for ways to optimize our training

14 programs while still maintaining a highly competent and technically qualified

15 workforce.

16   To improve the efficiency of the qualification process, we

17 encourage staff and supervisors to identify opportunities where requirements

18 are redundant due to demonstrated skills or prior work experience.   In these

19 situations, granting equivalency waivers for training requirements is

20 acceptable.   For example, waivers should be granted if individuals have

21 experience or have taken training that is equivalent to our required training

22 courses.

23   Management should ensure waivers are issued based on

24 demonstrated skills or specific prior work experience and should document

25 those waivers for training requirements in accordance with a specific

1   qualification program.   By accounting for prior expertise, we can better align

2   employees with opportunities that leverage their skills, reduce redundancy,

3   and boost overall efficiency within our qualification process.

4   Next slide, please.   In addition to the waiver process,

5   OCHCO is implementing test-out exams for online courses that will allow

6   staff to demonstrate they meet the respective knowledge requirements of a

7   given course.   The test-out exams will improve training efficiency because

8   they can be taken in lieu of a full online course.

9   Earlier this year, OCHCO performed a review of online

10   training and identified 25 courses that were required by qualification

11   programs and had completion times longer than 30 minutes.   Several had

12   completion times of hours or days and included offerings such as the Power

13   Plant Engineering course and the Fundamental Health Physics course.

14   OCHCO has already added a test-out feature for 23 of

15   these online courses, which are shown in blue on the slide.   Passing a

16   test-out exam for these courses could save knowledgeable staff several

17   hours of training time.   For example, a 72-hour class like the Power Plant

18   Engineering course can be reduced to a two-hour test-out exam, saving up

19   to 70 hours of training.   The remaining six online courses will have test-out

20   exams added by August 31st.   These courses are shown in yellow on the

21   slide.

22   It is important to note that although staff will have the

23   option to test out of these online qualification courses, they will still be

24   required to demonstrate knowledge or skill-based competencies during their

25   final oral qualification boards or practical exercises.

1   OCHCO is also implementing test-out exams for all current

2 and future mandatory agency-wide refresher training. These mandatory

3 refreshers include the courses shown in green on the slide. Test-out exams

4 for refresher courses could save each employee over four hours of training

5 by reducing each course to a 30-minute exam. This could result in

6 thousands of hours saved across the agency each year. Test-out exams

7 will be implemented for the mandatory refresher courses during the next

8 round of annual assignments in February of 2026.

9   Next slide, please. Over the last few years, the agency

10 has refined its approach to qualifying staff by exploring more effective and

11 efficient ways to ensure competency in critical skills and tasks directly

12 performed on the job. This is culminated in what is known as

13 competency-based qualification, or CBQ.

14   CBQ programs focus on performance outcomes versus

15 knowledge retention. And the recent Resident Inspector CBQ Pilot found

16 that this approach can result in faster qualification, especially if staff are

17 cross-qualifying from other positions or if they bring in industry experience

18 when they are hired.

19   Under the Resident Inspector CBQ Pilot, time to basic

20 qualification was decreased by 24 percent, or approximately 1.7 months, on

21 average because staff had more in-plant and on-the-job time during

22 qualification.

23   For CBQ programs, the training is based on a job task

24 analysis for a specific position. Assessors and mentors are engaged to

25 determine where staff are competent and what areas need further

1   development so the training is more flexible than other qualification models.

2   OCHCO has also designed the CBQ process to include automated tracking

3   and feedback from mentors on staff performance, which relieves

4   administrative burdens.

5   Next slide, please. Following completion of the CBQ Pilot

6   for Resident Inspectors, the NRC has successfully implemented the program

7   for that position, and 20 new Resident Inspectors have been enrolled in it.

8   NRR is also in the final stages of publishing a new appendix to Manual

9   Chapter 1245, which will formally codify the CBQ program as the primary

10 training path for all future Resident Inspectors within the NRC.

11   Since implementing the Competency-Based Qualification

12 Program for Resident Inspectors, OCHCO has published a CBQ framework

13 document to guide other offices in applying a competency-based approach

14 to qualification programs under their ownership.

15   OCHCO is currently assisting customers in Headquarters

16 and the regions to integrate this framework into their programs, and ongoing

17 projects include partnering with NRR to streamline technical qualifications

18 under ADM-504 and working with Region II to modernize the Administrative

19 Assistant Qualification Program.

20   OCHCO looks to expand the use of CBQ to other offices

21 and positions above and beyond these in the future.

22   Next slide, please. I would like to close my portion of the

23 presentation by sharing a video on a project design to modernize the reactor

24 training that the agency offers.   The video will discuss the recent completion

25 of a glass panel simulator, or GPS, at the NRC's Technical Training Center.

1   The GPS is currently undergoing its final testing and will be

2   implemented in training courses in 2026. Please enjoy this short video. I

3   hope it will give everyone a better understanding of the capabilities of this

4   state-of-the-art simulator.

5   (Video played.)

6   MR. GRIFFIS: Thank you. I would now like to turn the

7   presentation over to Mohammed.

8   MR. SHUAIBI: Thank you, Jeff. And good morning. My

9   name is Mohammed Shuaibi. I'm the Deputy Regional Administrator for

10   Region III. I'm going to highlight a few examples of how we work across the

11   agency to utilize resources to ensure mission success. This type of

12   cross-agency resourcing is used both for implementing our current programs

13   as well as advancing new ideas and improvements.

14   One of the agency's more visible projects is the ongoing

15   effort to review an application for the restart of the Palisades Nuclear Plant in

16   Michigan. This is a first-of-its-kind activity worldwide where a licensee has

17   sought to restart a power reactor after transitioning to decommissioning.

18   In order to establish an appropriate regulatory framework

19   for this project, including licensing and inspection, we chartered the

20   Palisades Restart Panel. This panel is cochaired by senior executives from

21   the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and Region III. The panel is also

22   supported by expertise from both offices and others across the agency.

23   This panel developed a path for timely review of the

24   application for licensing of Palisades as well as an appropriate and

25   complementary inspection plan for the activities at the plant and factored in

1   experience from recent licensing and construction activities of plants across

2   the agency.

3   In addition, as the chart shows, on the bottom right of this

4   slide, inspection activities have been supported by staff from across the

5   agency.   The chart shows the percentages of inspection staff that have

6   contributed to oversight of on-site activities by organization, demonstrating

7   that about 50 percent of inspections conducted at Palisades are provided by

8   our counterparts in other regions and Headquarters.

9   Beyond   Palisades,   cross-organizational   support   and

10   coordination is being used for two similar efforts, for the restart of the Crane

11   Clean Energy Center in Pennsylvania and the Duane Arnold Energy Center

12   in Iowa.   In fact, the restart panels for all three plants hold joint meetings to

13   exchange efficiencies and best practices.

14   The successful implementation of the agency's work on

15   this   project   has   been   providing   confidence   in   the   process   for   this

16   first-of-its-kind activity.

17   Next   slide,   please.   In   another   example   of

18   cross-organizational success, Region III was informed by a medical licensee

19   that their Gamma Knife, a device that is typically used for very precise

20   treatment of brain lesions and tumors, had not been serviced in a timely

21   manner to allow its use consistent with its license.   The medical facility had

22   scheduled patients for medical treatments using this device, but because of

23   the   missed   maintenance,   the   licensee   would   not   be   allowed   to   use   the

24   Gamma Knife.

25   Region   III   coordinated   with   experts   from   the   Office   of

1   Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards to evaluate options for the medical

2   licensee. Through this coordination and with input from the gamma knife

3   manufacturer, it was determined that because semiannual preventive

4   maintenance was being performed, an amendment could be submitted to

5   justify continued use of the gamma knife for near-term treatments.

6   As a result of quick engagement with our agency experts

7   and NMSS and good communication with the licensee, approval was

8   provided to the licensee within 12 days from initial contact. Most

9   importantly, no treatments were delayed.

10   Next slide, please. In the area of operator licensing,

11 cross-organizational coordination is required to levelize the peaks in

12 resource demands to support industry's needs for exam schedules.

13 Industry's needs in this area are significant, and schedules have limited

14 flexibility.

15   Sharing resources from across the agency has become

16 even more necessary over the past ten years due to the number of license

17 applicants, turnover in NRC staff, and limited resources. To address this

18 challenge, the agency made a shift to scheduling of examiners moving to a

19 more deliberate, nationwide approach.

20   Today, most exams include agency resources from parts

21 of the organization outside of the region that has the lead for the exam.

22 This approach has been successful in meeting industry's needs with a

23 smaller set of subject-matter experts.

24   The chart on the bottom right of the slide shows Region

25 III's exams for a given year in the lighter blue color and the number of

1 examiners used that same year from other parts of the organization in the

2 darker blue. We average about one outside examiner per exam, making up

3 about 20 to 25 percent of the team.

4   We have benefited from support from across all the

5 regions, as well as the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation and the

6 Technical Training Center.

7   Next slide, please. In response to staffing challenges in

8 the in-service inspection area, Region III is working with our counterparts in

9 other regions and the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation to institute a

10 tailored and more efficient proficiency model for training our inspectors.

11   Specialized training for in-service inspections can be

12 time-consuming, often taking years to complete. While the advanced

13 portions of this training is valuable for more complex in-service inspection

14 activities, it is not necessary for the oversight of other types of activities. As

15 such, we have developed a tiered approach for proficiency.

16   In this framework, Tier 1 is geared towards more general,

17 non-destructive examinations, welding, and boric acid corrosion control,

18 while Tier 2 would cover more complex areas like reactor pressure vessel

19 head penetration volumetric examinations, steam generator tube

20 inspections, and reactor vessel internal volumetric examinations.

21   In this framework, we can achieve more timely and

22 cost-efficient qualification of our staff and increase staffing flexibilities. This

23 allows for easier cross-qualification, thereby increasing our organizational

24 agility.

25   While this idea initiated in Region III, it is being worked and

1   supported by all four Regions and Headquarters, with the intent of

2   implementation agency-wide.

3   This concludes my portion of the presentation.   Thank you

4   for the opportunity to present today and I look forward to your questions.

5   MS. GAVRILAS: And that's it for all of us, we're looking

6   forward to your questions.

7   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Thank you.   Thank you, and

8   thank you for the efforts you took today to prepare. And I know you had

9   teams supporting you as well.

10   So, thank you for that. It's noted and appreciated.   And

11   my team appreciates each of you and what you do.   And we stand ready to

12   help you, just like I'm sure my colleagues do as well.

13   So, with that, let's start with questions.   And I believe

14   Commissioner Caputo starts.

15   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Good morning.   So, yes, I'll

16   add my compliments to the Chairman's.   Thank you all for preparing today

17   and for being here and giving us these presentations.

18   But I do want to highlight. in particular, Caroline, that was

19   an impressive presentation.   And I just sincerely thank you and your team.

20   This represents a lot of work and a lot of progress to implement modern

21   business processes. Something I think, is probably long overdue for this

22   agency.   So, thank you very much for all that you and your team are doing

23   there.

24   And, similar to Matthew, thank you.   Strategic workforce

25   planning has been a longstanding concern of mine. And I am thrilled that

1   we are finally implementing strategic workforce planning, particularly in a

2   way that is really rooted in the workload that we expect to see. And, you

3   know, data-driven analysis of where our needs are and how to plan

4   accordingly. So, thank you very much to you and your team for that.

5   So, I often reflect during Commission meetings on a

6   leadership   team   philosophy   from   Region   II,   mission-focused,

7   values-centered, and people-driven.

8   Our agency has struggled for many years to achieve

9   meaningful change. The recent executive orders and last year's passage in

10 the ADVANCE Act made the need for change an absolute imperative, and

11 the agency must respond with real reform.

12   And, as I've mentioned, I think we see some real reform

13 coming in terms of operations. And I respect and appreciate that.

14   We've also updated the mission statement and issued

15 implementation guidance recently. Our principles of good regulation and

16 our values remain sound.

17   But whether or not the agency succeeds in achieving

18 positive change depends on each individual and how they see themselves

19 embracing these changes and how they execute their duties. The mission,

20 principles, and values will guide the agency, but it is the people who make

21 the agency more effective.

22   At the RIC, I quoted Vince Lombardi, "the achievements of

23 an organization are the results of the combined efforts of each individual."

24   So, I want to add my thanks to the Chairman's. Thank

25 you for your collective focus on the mission, to all employees for their

1   resilience amid uncertainty, and commitment to navigating these changes

2   successfully as a team.

3   So, with that, I will turn my attention to additional questions

4   diving into project management a little more thoroughly.

5   Caroline talked about incorporating performance objectives

6   and reinforcing a commitment to shared purpose and accountability. Too

7   often we can fall behind schedule and make excuses rather than working as

8   a team to really remedy the problem.

9   So, I fully recognize any tools are ultimately going to come

10   down to management usage that actually uses the data driven, uses the

11   data provided to inform decision making.

12   So, Mirela, will the agency implement this tool agency-wide

13   for unified decision making, and leverage our human capital resources for

14   the maximum efficiency and impact?

15   MS. GAVRILAS: There's a commitment that, I think, you

16   will find from first-line contributors all the way to senior leaders, to actually

17   implement the project management tools.

18   We all recognize the need for this. We recognize the

19   need to be agile and move where the work actually is.

20   And we, in this environment, not only do we have the

21   commitment, but we're putting in place an infrastructure that is going to

22   make sure that we have the accountability mechanisms in place to use this

23   tool. No matter how great this tool is, like you said, it's going to be only as

24   effective as it's used.

25   And we are making sure that not only do, are people

1   committed, but that we are setting levels of accountability associated with

2   the use.

3   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, I ask agency-wide for a

4   particular reason, because I know that you have mentioned that all executive

5   director organizations are going to be implementing this.

6   Is it your understanding that other offices reporting to the

7   Commission are also adapting to use this tool?

8   MS. GAVRILAS: So, I know of at least two offices that,

9   two Commission offices that are committed to using this tool. But that's all I

10   know.

11   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay. Thank you for that.

12   So, you mentioned accountability. How will senior leaders be held

13   accountable for driving successful outcomes?

14   I mean, this is, at some point this has to be reflected in

15   performance objectives. So, how will that all work?

16   MS. GAVRILAS: That's it. It will be reflected in

17   performance. But we are looking at revamping performance objectives for

18   staff and managers alike. And we are going to have links between

19   performance measures, the use of these tools, in everybody's performance

20   plan. That's the plan.

21   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Thank you. One last

22   question. All right, this agency has a tendency to adopt something new and

23   simply pile it on everything else that exists.

24   This together, with the project management with strategic

25   workforce planning, has a potential to eliminate a bunch of other platforms,

1   processes, activities that are in place.

2   How will this be used to replace things that we already

3   have underway now? What will we stop doing, to actually capture the

4   efficiency of fully implementing this system?

5   MS. GAVRILAS: So, the beauty of what we presented

6   today, is that while this has functionality equivalent to some specialized

7   systems that are out there, we have cobbled together our own systems.

8   The beehive diagram that I think, Matt showed in his part

9   of the presentation, those are the existing systems and processes that

10   underpin the entire NEXUS system.

11   So, we're actually using what we have today, and if there

12   are redundancies, we'll ferret them out as we use it. But the entire system

13   is built on existing processes and data gathering systems.

14   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay. But that's going to

15   put us in a position of having to maintain all of those redundancies, because

16   this system is based on them. Is that really efficient in the long run?

17   MS. GAVRILAS: So, I don't look at them as

18   redundancies. I'm going to pass it to Caroline, because she can't wait too.

19   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay.

20   MS. GAVRILAS: But I don't look at them as

21   redundancies. I look at them as elements of the actual system. Go ahead.

22   MS. CARUSONE: Yes. So, I just thank you, Mirela. I

23   wanted to add, so one of the key facets of this, was that we really needed to

24   get people to hit the ground running. Right?

25   So, the idea of developing a new unfamilair system

1   seemed like it would be a setback for a why not, why we can't get moving.

2   And so, we did rely on the existing applications that are in place.   So, WBL,

3   RPS, the project management application that we have in another office.

4   So, we really focused on that.   But what we did was we

5   got all those groups together and we aligned on what were those minimum

6   data field requirements that Matt talked about.   And that was really key

7   because it helped us establish foundationally across all business lines and

8   all our work.   There's some fundamental things that we track and we do the

9   same.

10   And so, anytime you're looking at sort of an application

11   development process, you really do want to have alignment on what the

12   requirements are.

13   So, our ability to do that helps us to have a common needs

14   gathering to have that broader discussion.

15   We did also talk, we have a group called the Digital

16   Services Center, which is an opportunity to share what needs you might

17   have and have them help with some market research and some needs

18   assessments.   And they are looking at an assessment based on our current

19   requirements.

20   But I think that the key piece is that now we have some

21   convergence around what is needed across those areas, because a lot of it

22   is project tracking, right?   So, it's not fundamentally different.   We might do

23   it a little bit differently here in materials.   We might do it a little bit different in

24   reactors.   But that alignment was very important, so.

25   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Okay.   I -- some of the

1 systems that you mentioned are obviously very important to the agency.

2 What I would like to see, is a way of figuring out what

3 custom boutique software and programs really become obsolete in the wake

4 of adopting this system.

5 Because, this agency has a tendency to rely on a lot of

6 custom boutique systems for a range of applications that we then constantly

7 have to update and tweak, which drives a lot of costs.

8 So, in the nature of trying to simplify what we maintain for

9 an IT framework, I would love to see some simplification there. I see you

10 reaching for the microphone, but I'm going to move on because I have 48

11 seconds left.

12 So, Matt's presentation mentioned priority ranking, which,

13 you know, shorthand for that is the Add, Shed, Defer process. Previous

14 agency efforts have shown that the agency either can't or won't shed work

15 easily. And this seems to be a bit of a cultural issue. So, I'm wondering

16 whether a tool actually solves that.

17 However, it's going to help management make data-driven

18 decisions, which is a marked improvement on the past and will hopefully

19 enable prioritization of workload and resources, including the shedding of

20 low value work.

21 So, Matt, do you believe senior leadership can and will, or

22 Mirela, sorry, Mirela, it's probably not fair to ask this of Matt, will senior

23 leadership use this tool to prioritize efficient and timely execution of priority

24 licensing work to actually focus our resources on what's important?

25 MS. GAVRILAS: I think, the answer is the same that I had

1 earlier.   There's a commitment that I sent out there to using this tool.

2   But it will behoove all of us to actually follow up that people

3 are using the tool, and put in place the controls that are necessary to ensure

4 that the tools are being used the way they're intended to be used, and that,

5 actually, when somebody comes with a decision, that we're all aware of what

6 data underlies that decision and we make it part of the conversation.

7   So, it's a joint responsibility not for just us being committed

8 to making it happen, but all of us holding each other responsible for making it

9 happen.

10   COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: So, I've long believed

11 efficiency isn't about just -- it shouldn't be code for everyone needs to work

12 harder.   It should be code for, we need to work smarter and focus on

13 priorities.   And I hope that this becomes a tool for focusing those efforts.

14 Thank you.

15   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Commissioner.

16 Commissioner Crowell.

17   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Thank you all for your presentations today.   Always appreciate all the work

19 and preparation that goes into these discussions.

20   I'm going to use my time here to talk a little bit more than I

21 normally do, and hopefully get to some questions at the end.   But I wanted

22 to start with a few words expressing my thanks and gratitude to our former

23 Chair and Commissioner Hanson for his long service on the Commission.

24   This is our first Commission meeting that he's no longer

25 with us.   And his leadership during a very challenging time at the agency is

1 to be noted. You know, he took the agency from one that was looking

2 to -- you know, was probably preparing to steward the existing fleet to its

3 completion, to turning the tide to what hopefully will be a third and successful

4 effort at a true nuclear renaissance.

5 And he had to do that also while dealing with the COVID

6 pandemic and the challenges that came with that, and the challenges that

7 came out of it. And serving for four years as Chair is notable. It's a hard

8 job. It's harder than the regular Commission, Commissioners' roles, as our

9 Chairman, Mr. Wright, knows, learning every day.

10 But, you know, during Commissioner Hanson's time as

11 Chair, he did it with grace and professionalism, and focused on leadership

12 and not micro-management, but truly leading an agency. And it's to be

13 recognized and appreciated.

14 Next, Mirela, I wanted to express my gratitude for all that

15 you've done at the agency through your career. I've really enjoyed the last

16 few years getting to work with you and watch you go from inserted to EDO.

17 You are exactly the kind of leader and person we need at the NRC that has

18 both the technical expertise and the big picture thinking to drive results.

19 I think one of my favorite things about you is that you don't

20 indulge excuses or suffer fools. And you can back it up, because you

21 know what you're talking about, and I really appreciate it and admire that.

22 And thank you for your service. And I wish you all the best going forward

23 and hopefully you will have created a farm team of little Mirela gremlins that

24 will be sprouting at the agency in the months and years ahead.

25 And then let me just express my thanks and appreciation

1   to all the staff at the NRC for all that you do on a daily basis here at

2   Headquarters and in the Regions. No one came to the NRC for an easy

3   job.

4   I've had a variety of jobs in federal and state government,

5   and the NRC definitely takes the cake for how dedicated and hardworking of

6   a staff we have here. The trope of a lazy bureaucrat doesn't exist at the

7   NRC. Our problem is probably we work too hard sometimes and lose sight

8   of the big picture.

9   But here we are at another very interesting, and I'm just

10   going to say challenging, time for the agency. We've got a lot of mandates

11   and direction being given to us that are laudable in their goals, but are going

12   to be high hurdles in terms of execution.

13   But I think we can get it done if we do it as a cohesive

14   workforce, and a family, and one that is supporting each other. I'm not

15   going to put rose-colored glasses on it being easy. But I think it's doable. I

16   think we have a chance to make history if we all stick to it and come

17   together.

18   And I'm, you know, looking forward to being a part of that.

19   And I would just encourage everyone, as you go about your daily jobs and

20   responsibilities, is just ask yourself, you know, are you on the right side of

21   the safety equation, the safety case? And if the answer is yes, then

22   proceed. If you're not feeling that, then say something, talk to your

23   colleagues, talk to your supervisors.

24   But know that there are, you know, there's some

25   subjectivity in the safety case. It's not black and white, and we need to be

1   on the right side of the ledger and not the other.   And that if we all

2   collectively stay in that realm, we will also be on the right side of history,

3   which is where we want to end up and we want to be a part of.

4   So, thank you for all that you do in each of your individual

5   jobs and on the Commission, and I look forward to working with my

6   Commission colleagues to support your efforts.

7   With that, I have a few questions.   And I'm going to just

8   throw them out there and whoever wants to hit the buzzer fastest, or slowest,

9   or point at their colleague to answer it instead of them, they can.

10   One of them is, you know, I'm thinking about all of these

11   things that were presented today in the context of the recent Executive

12   orders.   And I'm thinking about the work that other agencies are going to do,

13   be doing on advanced reactor technology, specifically Department of Energy

14   and Department of Defense.

15   How are we going to apply our project management efforts

16   or our knowledge management and project tracking?   How do we keep

17   track of what's going on at those entities so that we're not having to be

18   duplicative and creating a whole new set of knowledge and data, or you

19   know, that we can benefit and leverage from the work of these other

20   agencies?

21   How does that fit into this bigger picture of improving our

22   own internal processes?

23   Mirela, please.

24   MS. GAVRILAS: I'm reacting.   So, we as an agency,

25   have been pretty close throughout the year to our colleagues in the federal

1   family who do similar work.

2   So, we are aware of what DOE is using in their

3   decision-making process. We understand their guidance documents. We

4   understand their regulatory framework mentality.

5   So, what we'll have to do is a better integration, a better

6   crosswalk between what our thinking is and their thinking is, and identifying

7   where we align and where we don't align. And then trying to get to the

8   bottom of why.

9   In terms of project management, it is my hope that we will

10   manage every big project in this agency, whether it's a standalone, NRC

11   project within one office, or a major collaboration with different agencies.

12   And that it will have the opportunity to avail itself of a certain set of subject

13   matter experts, to avail of the tools that we're putting in place with milestone

14   monitoring and progress towards the milestones.

15   So, I think there's going to be companion efforts of

16   capturing the knowledge and making sure that we're aligned and

17   understanding the basis, and managing the project itself on using the tools

18   that we have.

19   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So, during my time on the

20   Commission, the one point of reflection or example that I think of is, our work

21   with the Navy on the Columbia-class submarine. Is it that kind of

22   engagement that we hope to be doing going forward?

23   Or, is it different in character depending on whether it's

24   what other agency it is, or whether it's a commercial or military application?

25   Is there comparison here?

1   MS. GAVRILAS: It may be early for us to talk about that.

2   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay.

3   MS. GAVRILAS: Because, I think that the nature of the

4 project and what's needed, is still developing.

5   So, I think, it's new and the question will be best asked of a

6 successor panel probably.

7   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay.   And you're always

8 welcome back, Mirela, if you have any time.   If you don't answer the phone,

9 I don't blame you.

10   Jennifer, I apologize if I tuned out while you or one of your

11 employees were talking about this.   But can you talk a little bit about how

12 we've leveraged the special hiring authorities we have to make the turn on

13 time to hire and filling important vacancies?

14   MS. GOLDER: So, we've posted three vacancies since

15 the hiring freeze was in place.   And we do use our special hiring authorities.

16 Where it makes sense, we try to leverage all of them as much as possible.

17 We've had good success in the three vacancies we've posted.

18   For the senior resident inspector position that we posted,

19 that was for seven sites.   And we selected -- we have filled five of the

20 positions.   And we were able to do that, make the offers within under 45

21 days.   So, that's very positive.

22   And we are working through the other positions as well.

23 For every position that we post, we do look at all of the authorities we can

24 leverage before we move forward.   It's our intention to maximize every

25 possibility.

1   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Good.   In each case we

2   look at what the, --

3   MS. GOLDER: Yes, absolutely.

4   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: What our best leverage

5   points are.

6   MS. GOLDER: Yep, absolutely.

7   COMMISSIONER CROWELL: That's great.   Okay.   I

8   have other questions that I will defer for now.   And I'll just end with one last

9   reflection, picking up on my earlier comments.

10   I was at Region I recently, speaking to an all-hands.   And I

11   always enjoy those, but I asked a question of the group while I was there.   I

12   said, you know, how many new hires are in the room since the beginning of

13   this calendar year?   And there were two, I think, at least.

14   And one was an entry level, I think, an NRANer.   And the

15   other was a mid-career person.   And I asked them, you know, what inspired

16   them to come to the agency and would they do it again?

17   And, you know, they both said yes.   But what inspired

18   them was the sense of purpose that you get out of public service, the unique

19   perspective and things that you can learn from being here.

20   Even if you've been in this field on the outside, you will still

21   learn things once you come on the inside, and then you can add value later

22   on the outside.

23   And I was reassured by that commitment and enthusiasm.

24   But it was tempered somewhat by concern on their part about whether it was

25   the best thing for their career trajectories.   And I hope that, over time, those

1 fears will be mitigated and we'll be able to continue to hire new folks who are

2 excited to be here.

3   So, thank you all for what you do and continue to do.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Commissioner

6 Crowell. Commissioner Marzano?

7   COMMISSIONER MARZANO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 I find myself sitting here kind of nodding my head a lot about what I'm

9 hearing today. And I'm very encouraged by what's being presented and, of

10 course, you know, the perspectives of my former -- sorry, of my colleagues

11 here.

12   So, I'll just begin. I want to associate myself with the

13 remarks of Commissioner Crowell about Commissioner Hanson.

14   During his tenure, you know, he made significant

15 contributions to get the ADVANCE Act to where it became as law, and also

16 helped build the foundation on which we can now help to achieve those

17 goals and those aims. And so, I commend him for his work and his service

18 there.

19   I'm also, you know, listening to, you know, as how we

20 navigate this moment right now, I want to associate myself with

21 Commissioner Caputo in terms of the focus on getting a, you know,

22 data-driven decision making.

23   And it begins with having a systematic strategic workforce

24 planning process, project management, et cetera. You know, this is the

25 foundation again, for how we show externally to folks that we are being

1   efficient.

2   And it really depends on getting that data and gathering in.

3   So, you know, I really do appreciate those efforts.   And I look forward,

4   again, you know, the devil's in the details with implementation, et cetera,

5   buy-in.   But I'm very encouraged by what I see, and I agree with

6   Commissioner Caputo on that.

7   That said, I'm going to get to a little bit of remarks here too.

8   So, good morning everyone.   This meeting is coming at a timely, or is very

9   timely in terms of what is going on around us.

10   And so, amidst to all this rapid change, we must continue

11   to establish, that we must use this time to establish where we are so we can

12   chart our course forward.

13   And we must also preserve our core values as an agency,

14   as we embark on a cultural shift in response to all that we've been directed

15   to do.   To me, this means engaging in all levels of the agency to inform our

16   reorganization, drawing from the staff's knowledge and expertise and

17   experience to get this right.

18   So, I'd like to extend my thanks not just to the staff

19   presenting at this table, but to the people that support you, and to those

20   listening this morning, both in person and virtually.

21   But, before I go on any further, I would like to take a

22   moment to congratulate you, Mirela, on your over two decades of public

23   service, commitment to the NRC, and the nation.

24   I will sound a little bit like a broken record here, but some

25   of you may have already heard me say, but my old boss, Senator Tom

1 Carper, always used to say that as we serve, our families serve with us.

2 So, I'd like to thank them as well, for sharing the time over

3 your impressive career, and their support to enable you to do so. So, thank

4 you.

5 Mirela, there are a number of initiatives that you have

6 spearheaded, some which we heard about today, that have set the agency

7 on a positive trajectory to meet the direction of the ADVANCE Act, and

8 refocus the work of the NRC.

9 To accomplish our updated mission, we as an agency

10 must be united. Together, we can overcome the challenges we face and

11 come out the other side even more efficient and effective.

12 And that brings us to the topic of today's meeting. The

13 attention given to this topic is illustrated by the sizeable audience here with

14 us this morning, and underscores for me that focusing on the people of the

15 NRC, continues to be one of my highest priorities for the agency.

16 The time that I have accumulated thus far as a

17 Commissioner over the past few months has only reinforced my commitment

18 to ensure our people are prepared to meet the demands of tomorrow. So, I

19 thank you for all of the work that you do to support those efforts.

20 So, I'd like to turn my questions. Mo, good to see you.

21 It's been a long time.

22 MR. SHUAIBI: Commissioner.

23 COMMISSIONER MARZANO: I thank you for hosting me

24 in Region III, and for facilitating my visits to my home plant in Braidwood and

25 LaSalle.

1   It was a highlight of my time so far to go back and see my

2   old colleagues, and see all the growth and how everyone has, where they've

3   all landed over there.   So, it was an incredibly positive experience.

4   And I also want to thank the resident inspectors that

5   helped support and facilitate that visit at Braidwood, Phil and John.   And

6   then, in LaSalle, Johnny and Jamie.   So, thank you to them as well.

7   I want to come back to you on some of the work that

8   you've presented here.   But, along the lines of our resident inspectors, I

9   want to ask a little bit about the merit hiring plan.

10   So, I know this has been a focus area for OCHCO, and it

11   continues to develop.   But one element of the new merit hiring plan that I

12   want to mention, is a call to eliminate unnecessary degree requirements.

13   As I've talked to folks across the agency, I've heard some

14   of the frustration.   That despite being highly trained and knowledgeable,

15   some individuals have incredible nuclear related experience.   For example,

16   those who have served in the Navy Nuclear Propulsion Program.

17   And in lieu of or prior to earning a degree, are hired at

18   lower grade levels than their counterparts who have earned degrees first and

19   then accumulated experience.

20   So, I recognize that you're continuing to work on this merit

21   hiring, on the implementation of this plan.   But, in your view, do you think

22   these changes from OPM can help alleviate this problem and support

23   recruitment efforts?

24   MS. GOLDER: Thank you for the question.   So, we are

25   still awaiting more detailed guidance from OPM on various aspects of the

1   merit hiring plan. And there is a desire, I know, and an expectation, that

2   there will be various positions that change, or the requirements change, for

3   various positions.

4   I'm not sure about the engineering series, the

5   expectations. Right now, those, we follow the merit hiring principles. And

6   engineering positions do require -- the basic requirements are that the

7   applicant or selectee have a degree in engineering. And that includes

8   multiple, certain courses within, such as strength of materials.

9   They have to have five of seven areas of engineering

10   science or physics, including statics and dynamics, strength of materials in

11   stress/strain relationships, fluid mechanics, hydraulics, thermodynamics,

12   electrical fields and circuits, or nature properties and properties of materials;

13   or any other comparable area of fundamental engineering science or

14   physics.

15   Or, they need a combination of education and experience,

16   which includes 60 hours of college level courses and/or a written test.

17   So, we are continuing to monitor what comes from OPM.

18   But, right now, engineering positions require -- have a positive education

19   degree. We would have to consider other types of positions that don't have

20   positive degree requirements.

21   COMMISSIONER MARZANO: Yeah, I think, I understand

22   that. But, you know, given again the direction that's being asked in the plan,

23   you know, what avenues do we have to say to OPM, here's a disconnect.

24   And that your merit hiring plan has the intent of facilitating,

25   you know, the incorporation in the agency and, you know, federal

1   government-wide, of folks that have this specialized experience without

2   necessarily a degree.

3   So, you know, I guess if there are those avenues, maybe

4   you could talk a little bit about them now.   But, you know, I just encourage

5   as, you know, the OCHCO council meetings and things that we're continuing

6   to identify ways to be more kind of aligned with those elements of the plan.

7   But I would like to move onto another question, if that's

8   okay.

9   MS. GOLDER: Okay.

10   COMMISSIONER MARZANO: Back to you, Mo.   So, you

11   know, you mentioned, you know, timely decision making, and you kind of

12   gave some examples of this innovative decision-making process that you've

13   undertaken in Region III.

14   You know, timeliness in decision making is kind of one of

15   the core principles that we wanted to incorporate in the ADVANCE Act, and

16   it's featured there as well.

17   And so, you know, this is really when we talk about how we

18   meet the moment, how we implement the ADVANCE Act, these are the

19   kinds of things that I think, are there.

20   So, you know, pulling back from those specific case

21   studies, you know, what commonalities do you see between those efforts,

22   and what lessons can be gleaned for the rest of the agency?   And how can

23   we disseminate those learnings to build that consistency and be more

24   timely?

25   MR. SHUAIBI: Yes, thank you for the question,

1   Commissioner. And it was a pleasure having you at Region III and going

2   out with you to Braidwood and seeing you out there.

3   So, in addition to my work in Region III, I'm also working on

4   an SDI that talks about guidance versus consulting. We talked a little bit

5   about that when you were out.

6   And I think the success that we're having, whether it's on

7   the material side or reactor side, comes to engagement, communication, and

8   making sure that we're engaged with the licensee that has a need for some

9   license, or some amendment, or some change.

10   Both on the Palisades restart project, as well as the

11 gamma knife issue, that I presented here today, we have great engagement

12 with the licensees. We're integrated with their schedules. We're integrated

13 with their needs. We get the information and then engage internally across

14 the agency.

15   So, that open line of communication between us and the

16 applicant or the licensee, common understanding of what the issues are and

17 how to get to that success at the end, while maintaining and making sure

18 that our focus is on safety is really the outcome.

19   And I think that SDI is going to actually be an across the

20 agency activity, not just for Region III. So I think, Mirela, that was your

21 direction there that led to that SDI.

22   And I think we're close to final on that. So, hopefully we'll

23 have a public version of that out soon and it will help the engagement to

24 facilitate success in a timely manner.

25   COMMISSIONER MARZANO: Well, I wholeheartedly

1   agree, our communication both internally and externally, and the quality of

2   that communication, is extremely important to build the efficiency that we

3   need to see.

4   So, thank you all again for your presentations. And, Mr.

5   Chairman.

6   CHAIRMAN   WRIGHT: Thank   you,   Commissioner

7   Marzano. I'm going to get to bat cleanup this morning. And I've got a lot I

8   want to cover. And I'm going to save you to the end, okay?

9   Jennifer,   I'm   going   to   start   with   you   real   quick.

10   Time-to-hire has been something that myself and others here have been

11   very concerned about over the last few years, and trying to figure out how do

12   we get from 140, you know, down to 80, right? And we haven't been able to

13   get there since I've been here, you know.

14   I do appreciate the work that you're involved in and how

15   you're really trying to make the changes to get there. And I know there's

16   some roadblocks, there's some problems that are out there that you've got to

17   understand and try to figure your way through. I understand that.

18   But tell me about what you've done or the meetings that

19   you all have. Maybe have you met with other CHCOs and other agencies?

20   And is there something that you've learned there that you might be able to

21   apply here to help? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

22   MS. GOLDER: Yeah. There has been -- there was

23   benchmarking as part of the assessment that was conducted earlier this

24   year. The process we were using, I think we were -- we had duplication and

25   there was inconsistencies in guidance that was provided and we were not

1   tracking every component.

2   And, since then, after the assessment, we have, we built a

3   tool that will ensure accountability and transparency so that at every stage

4   we can track and set expectations. And this will hold staff in OCHCO and

5   hiring managers accountable. And they'll have a better understanding of

6   exactly what the expectation is and exactly where they are in the process.

7   And that alone will help drive change.

8   Additionally, we have eliminated the rating panels. And

9   that aligns perfectly with the merit hiring plan from the administration. And

10   that will help us greatly, because there was a significant amount of time,

11   weeks devoted to panels meeting, independently assessing, and then

12   meeting. So, that will reduce time greatly.

13   And then, hiring managers will have more say. They'll

14   have more, they'll have a greater role and they'll have tools that we will be

15   getting from OPM to help conduct assessments.

16   I think other agencies, from what we've learned, have had

17   similar experiences than our agency. But, between the assessment we

18   conducted and the time to hire -- the merit hiring guidance from OPM, we are

19   in a great path forward.

20   We have also been able to reduce some duplication in our

21   process. And we've been working with the Office of Administration to

22   streamline the background screening process. And that will all help.

23   So, I'm confident we're going to get to 80 days this year. I have a lot of

24   confidence. I know that might seem a little --

25   (Simultaneous speaking.)

1   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: I love the positivity.   I am there.

2   MS. GOLDER: Yeah.   But I feel very confident.   I'm

3   looking at Rich Revzan in the back of the room, and he also is confident.

4   We're going to make it happen.

5   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Good.   I hope you do.

6   MS. GOLDER: Thank you.

7   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: I am pulling for you.   So, another

8   thing that's concerning is, you know, we have a large portion of our

9   workforce that's eligible to retire, which is concerning.   And, you know, we're

10   still under a hiring freeze.

11   So, what are you doing to set the agency up for success

12   here so that when we are able to hire, we're going to be able to attract and

13   retain the talent that we're going to need to move the agency forward?

14   And the whole strategic workforce thing is very important,

15   and I appreciated the conversation that you had with Commissioner Caputo.

16   But it looks like there's a real need that's going to be in the licensing review

17   and, you know, the whole review process, not just for advanced reactors and

18   microreactors, but also for plants and license renewals, power uprates, the

19   whole nine yards.

20   Are we identifying like, the scope of what we're going to

21   need?   And, you know, when we're going to need that?   And are you all up

22   to date with that?

23   MS. GOLDER: Well, we're still finalizing our strategic

24   workforce planning process and tools.   And so, when we're -- so, we're not

25   quite there.   But we still are finalizing implementation.

1   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Yeah.

2   MS. GOLDER: Okay.   But we do have a good sense of

3   where we need to be focusing our efforts, including licensing and reviews.

4   And we are preparing for an NRAN cohort in the future.

5   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Right.

6   MS. GOLDER: Which will help.   And we are going to be

7   looking at transforming our recruitment efforts.

8   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Okay.   Caroline, I'm going to

9   come back to you in a second.   But the qualifications part, I wanted to come

10   to you about that.   So, I really appreciate how you're trying to capture all of

11   that, and each person has kind of a card on file, so to speak.

12   What happens if not everything's listed?   What if

13   some -- how are you updating cards if there's something on somebody, if

14   they look at their card and they say, oh, well, I'm qualified here but it's not

15   listed?   How are you updating that and how are you able to track it?

16   MS. CARUSONE: That's a great question.   And I am

17   going to defer to Matt, who's been working on the development of our

18   NEXUS application for those updates.

19   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Okay.

20   MR. MEYER: Yeah.   And part of this process with

21   building this tool for the NEXUS tool application, we were looking at what

22   data and the integrity of that data.

23   Refining it and cleaning it as we go through this.

24   Definitely identifying areas where there may be gaps.

25   So, within that process that once the application is into

1   production, having the staff look at what's in there, be able to add, modify,

2   and be able to validate each of the different data fields, so we have a

3   complete accurate picture of what's in there going forward.

4   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Okay.   Right.   Caroline, I want to,

5   first off, want to associate my, you know, myself with Commissioner Caputo's

6   comments about you, your presentation.   Very detailed, very good.

7   And it's not the first time that I've seen you do this.   A

8   couple of weeks ago when we had the meeting where you were explaining

9   this whole program, probably one of the better meetings I've attended in

10   several years here, that very complete, very detailed, and exciting about

11   what is on the horizon.

12   And I know that one of the things that's holding you back is

13   the implementation, or I guess, the uploading of data and the collection of

14   the data, and then I guess, the testing and being sure that the verification

15   and all that.

16   Is there any chance you all are going to get ahead of

17   schedule a little bit so it could be used quicker than what we talked about a

18   few weeks ago?

19   MS. CARUSONE: Sure.   So, we definitely are trying at

20   every juncture.   I think a big portion of what we're focusing on now is, I

21   talked about really focusing on the data.   Right?

22   So, how are we collecting the data?   How are we able to

23   extract the data?   And so, we are able to do that now for the data that we

24   have available to us.

25   So, we've been focusing on, you know, Matt just talked

1   about some of the specialty information.   That's an area where there's still a

2   bit of a gap, because we're getting that information through resumes,

3   position descriptions, right?

4   But it's not formatted in a way that's going to be usable.

5   But we are looking at it in very piecemeal in terms of, we're kind of like

6   calling it micro-applications, in terms of instead of doing this big unveiling all

7   at once, what pieces can we make readily available now to begin to use?

8   And so, that's where you saw some of the tools that are

9   already live, like the ability to look at workload, and sort of see where time is

10   being spent.   Since we last met, we've established new EPIDs to make sure

11   that the work is being tracked at a more granular level, and people can build

12   to that.

13   So, that is our hope, we will continue to push and try to be

14   aggressive to get something out as soon as possible, but.

15   MS. GAVRILAS: So, I'm going to chime in here, because

16   I want to give these guys credit for an unbelievable effort.   We started -- we

17   didn't come to the Commission and say, give us resources to explore what's

18   out there in terms of project management.   We literally cobbled together

19   what we had.   And in a short year since I started this SDI, we are where we

20   are today.   And kudos to them because we're actually starting to use that.

21   And we are using it, for example, to decide how many

22   positions, when we approve one of these hiring exceptions, how many

23   positions are we actually going to fill?   We're looking at who's available, and

24   how are they loaded?   And that informs our decisions today.   So I'm very

25   proud of them.

1   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Yes. As are we. And that's a

2   perfect segue right now to you, you know, before we gavel this meeting

3   down.

4   One, I want to thank each of you for your presentations.

5   We could probably spend another hour in here talking about stuff.

6   But, Mirela, I want to join my colleagues and take a

7   moment to say thank you and to recognize you. You've been here for 21

8   years, I think, that's right. And you've served in many capacities, from

9   Research, to NRR, to NSIR, and now as EDO. There is absolutely nothing

10 in the last two decades here at the NRC that you have not been a part of,

11 and left a mark on in a positive way.

12   There are many things that people shied away from to get

13 involved in that you did not shy away from. You jumped in willingly, even

14 volunteering for some of the stuff that you had to go through, which did

15 benefit this agency. And still is benefitting this agency.

16   And, for that, I'm very grateful. And I know that my

17 colleagues are as well. And that this whole agency, every staff person here,

18 both in the walls and the regions, you know, they are very pleased with what

19 you have done here.

20   You know, for the last year you've been, -- part of the year

21 anyway, been serving as EDO, and you've done an exceptional job. And I

22 can't thank you enough for your years of dedication and service, not just to

23 the NRC and the country, but also as my friend and my colleague.

24   And, you know, we wouldn't be the agency that we are

25 today without what you have done, and your leadership and your dedication.

1   And I'm going to miss you, right? I do. I appreciate your friendship. So, if

2   it's appropriate, everyone, if you don't mind, could we celebrate Mirela and

3   all that she has done?

4   (Applause.)

5   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: So, thank you, everyone, for that.

6   And, Mirela, here's to a happy retirement and a very fruitful future. And if

7   you have any comments you would like to make, I'm going to let you do it

8   right now.

9   MS. GAVRILAS: It's been an absolute honor to be a

10   public servant given the important mission and the wonderful people of the

11   NRC. So, I really cherish the opportunity. Thank you all.

12   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: Thank you. And, before we

13   close, if there are any other final comments from the Commission?

14   (No response.)

15   CHAIRMAN WRIGHT: With that, hearing none, this

16   meeting is adjourned.

17   (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record

18   at 11:35 a.m.)