

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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29th ANNUAL REGULATORY INFORMATION CONFERENCE

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WELCOME, INTRODUCTORY REMARKS, AND THE VIEWS OF THE
HONORABLE KRISTINE L. SVINICKI, CHAIRMAN

+ + + + +

WEDNESDAY,

MARCH 15, 2017

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ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

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The Regulatory Information Conference met
in the Grand Ballroom at the Bethesda North Marriott
Hotel & Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road,
Rockville, Maryland, at 8:00 a.m., William M. Dean,
Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation,
facilitating.

PRESENT:

KRISTINE L. SVINICKI, Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory
Commission

WILLIAM M. DEAN, Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor
Regulations

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

8:00 a.m.

DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. Good morning everybody. Normally we have an Honor Guard that comes in for the opening ceremony, but unfortunately, because of the weather, they had to cancel that, so what I would ask is that everybody please rise for a rendition of the National Anthem by Kimberly Gaskins.

(The National Anthem was sung.)

DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. Good morning, and welcome at last to the 29th Annual Regulatory Information Conference. I am Bill Dean. I am the Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, and it is a great honor to be here today and have this opportunity to welcome everyone on behalf of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

We truly appreciate everybody's patience and flexibility as we have navigated the challenges of this week's weather event. I will tell you that I do not intend to name any of my future pets or ask any of my children to name their grandchildren Stella.

So my office, along with the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research led by Mike Weber, co-sponsored this event. We worked very closely with many of the offices in the NRC to put together this

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1 conference, and I trust you will find the next two days
2 to be both informative and engaging. But first of all,
3 I would like to have another round of applause to thank
4 Kim Gaskins of the NRC for her wonderful rendition of
5 the National Anthem.

6 (Applause.)

7 DIRECTOR DEAN: As you are all aware, we
8 have had to re-adjust the agenda since we lost all of
9 Tuesday. Thankfully, we are able to utilize additional
10 space here at the Marriott to conduct more sessions at
11 one time, but more than we had originally planned, so
12 that means you will have to make tougher decisions as
13 to what technical sessions you will have to attend, but
14 many of you are already paid well to make tough
15 decisions.

16 The RIC is the largest annual meeting
17 hosted by the NRC, and its format provides an
18 environment for an informal and open dialogue between
19 the NRC and its many stakeholders on topics pertaining
20 to nuclear regulatory activities and emergent issues
21 that are of interest to the domestic and the
22 international nuclear community. This year, we have
23 almost 2900 registrants -- and given the weather, that
24 is actually pretty darn good -- representing 38
25 countries. We are tabulating the number of no-shows to

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1 calculate an attendance percentage. As you know, there
2 is a fine line between the numerator and the
3 denominator, and only a fraction of you will get that.

4 I would like to recognize all of you who are
5 taking the time to participate in the RIC as well as
6 several distinguished attendees that I hope were able
7 to make it this morning. I have seen a number of them.
8 I just saw former Chairman Allison Macfarlane is here.
9 I am not sure if I saw Chairman Diaz. He is here?
10 Great. And Chairman Meserve, I am not sure if Chairman
11 Meserve made it yet.

12 And then former Commissioners, Bill
13 Ostendorff, I know I talked to him this morning, he is
14 over there. Did George Apostolakis make it, George?
15 He is right there, over there. Great. George, how are
16 you doing? Bill Magwood, I know Bill is here, and I did
17 see Jeff Merrifield.

18 So I do ask you -- I do ask you that we have
19 currently two open Commissioner spots, so maybe a few
20 of you would be willing to consider a term appointment
21 until we can get the confirmation for the other two
22 Commissioners. If so, let me know and I can see what
23 I can do.

24 All right. This year's conference
25 features several distinguished speakers. To open the

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1 RIC, our keynote speaker is newly appointed Chairman
2 Kristine L. Svinicki, and she will be followed by NRC's
3 Executive Director for Operations, Victor McCree.
4 Later this morning, you will also have an opportunity
5 to hear from Commissioners Jeff Baran and Stephen G.
6 Burns, and we are very pleased to also have with us as
7 special guest speaker today Admiral Robert F. Willard,
8 President and Chief Executive Officer of the Institute
9 of Nuclear Power Operations. I do want to note that
10 given the fact that we had to compress the schedule,
11 there probably will not be as much time for Q&A as we
12 may have had in the past, but we will have some
13 opportunity for Q&A for each of our speakers.

14 The technical program consists of 31
15 technical sessions hosting experts from across the
16 Agency as well as from industry, academia, and
17 international counterparts. Sessions offer a variety
18 of topics, including significant domestic and
19 international issues associated with operating
20 reactors, new and advanced reactors, fuel cycle
21 facilities, spent fuel, nuclear security, and safety
22 research initiatives.

23 I am sorry. Excuse me. I just got a buzz
24 in my ear, but I apologize. We had Price Waterhouse
25 Cooper do some of the accounting work for us, and I was

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1 informed they miscounted the number of technical
2 sessions. It is actually 28, so I apologize for that.
3 This reminds me of why I don't trust atoms. They make
4 up everything.

5 (Laughter.)

6 DIRECTOR DEAN: All right. Okay. This
7 year, we are also featuring 26 technical posters and
8 tabletop exhibits on display throughout the conference
9 space. Topics include significant regulatory issues,
10 important research findings, and other items of high
11 interest. Each morning and during all breaks and over
12 the lunch hours, the subject matter experts are present
13 to engage in discussions relative to their areas of
14 expertise, so please take advantage of that.

15 A tradition for the RIC are the tours of the
16 NRC Operations Center. The tour check-in area is
17 located outside the White Flint Amphitheater, which is
18 on the lower level. Unfortunately, we had to cancel two
19 of the tours yesterday, and the remaining three tours
20 are completely booked, so if you are participating in
21 a tour, please arrive at the tour check-in area 30
22 minutes in advance of the tour to allow time for
23 processing and clearance through security. Those of
24 you who missed out yesterday, I apologize, or anybody
25 else who might be interested, but often times, we do have

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1 cancellations and no-shows, so if you are interested,
2 I encourage you to go and check in with the staff
3 downstairs in advance of one of the tour sessions to see
4 if there is space available.

5 So what is new? So most notably, our
6 program is new. It is smaller in size and in number of
7 pages. We have streamlined the conference materials.
8 We eliminated the pocket guide. You can take something
9 out of here that would serve as a pocket guide, but
10 unfortunately, with the agenda change, this really does
11 us no good, so -- .

12 However, the session descriptions, the
13 speaker information, the poster and tabletop
14 descriptions are all found on the RIC website in a part
15 of the website called Conference Programs, so if you go
16 there, you can click on that, and that will give you all
17 the information that you need. Also, later this
18 morning, we will have hard copies of the revised agenda
19 available throughout the conference center, so have no
20 fear.

21 OPA has developed a video, a short video
22 called Stay Connected and Share NRC Information. It
23 highlights the Agency's social media activities and
24 emphasizes how we can convey NRC information to a
25 broader audience with those widely-used contemporary

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1 tools. This video is being shown in the session room
2 screens on the overflow monitors and at the Office of
3 Public Affairs table in the grand ballroom foyer.

4 We have also created an NRC Photos and Facts
5 slideshow that adds a photographic element into our
6 presentation of interesting facts about the NRC and the
7 industry that we regulate. It will be shown on session
8 room screens and overflow monitors before the program
9 begins and during lunch and during breaks. We have used
10 this once before, so if you like it, it was my idea to
11 bring it back. If you don't like it, it was Mike Weber's
12 idea.

13 And as I am sure you have seen, a parking
14 garage is being built on what used to be the back parking
15 lot. The good news is it will be completed before next
16 year's RIC, so it will be available for next year, but
17 in the meantime, the Marriott has a dedicated shuttle
18 service to take RIC participants to and from a satellite
19 parking location. Parking is \$10 a day, and payment
20 should be made at the kiosk located at the lower level
21 by the registration service desk prior to boarding the
22 shuttle. There is no attendant at the satellite
23 parking location, for your information.

24 So some things that are back in the RIC: we
25 once again will be live tweeting selections from various

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1 sessions. These live tweets will be displayed on the
2 overflow monitors, intermingled with the NRC Facts and
3 Photos. While these tweets probably will not engender
4 as much interest as tweets from other government
5 officials, I do want you to know that I personally have
6 five followers, not including my mom, so I thank all five
7 of you for being my followers.

8 And then back by popular demand, if you need
9 to charge an electronic device, a cell phone charging
10 station is available for use, and it is located at the
11 bottom of the stairs on the lower level next to the
12 internet and print center, so right out here and down
13 the stairs.

14 So some general information: safety and
15 security are of the utmost importance to the NRC, so in
16 addition to visibly displaying your badges at all times,
17 the following safety measures are standard for the RIC:
18 security bag checks during each entry into the
19 conference space; emergency contact cards provided at
20 registration during check-in, they're on the back of
21 your badge, so please make sure you fill them out; also
22 we have support from Montgomery County Police and K-9
23 officers on the property, and we greatly appreciate
24 their support, knowing how much they have been in demand
25 over the last couple of days with the bad weather.

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1 As a general reminder, we ask participants
2 to, if you see something, say something. Report any
3 suspicious activity to the security staff or hotel
4 staff. And the property has fire exits that are clearly
5 marked in the backs and sides of each of the session
6 rooms, and the hotel is equipped with two automatic
7 external defibrillators, which are located near the
8 main lobby of the hotel.

9 There are some sessions that are at maximum
10 capacity for seating, so we encourage you to make your
11 way to these session rooms as early as possible because
12 it will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Room
13 monitors there will assist you with seating to ensure
14 that all seats are filled, and in accordance with Fire
15 Marshal regulations, once rooms are filled to capacity,
16 participants will be directed to other sessions. I do
17 ask the NRC staff that are in attendance, if you find
18 yourself in a session where that situation occurs, to
19 please give up your seat for some of our external guests
20 to be able to participate in the session. It does
21 surprise me though that we do have some of these
22 high-capacity sessions, given the fact that I am neither
23 chairing nor presenting at any session.

24 Each year, we ask for your feedback so we
25 can fine-tune the program the following year. For

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1 example, based on feedback from last year, we have
2 brought back aisle microphones for the technical
3 sessions. It is very important that you share your
4 opinions with us, and of course, an opinion without 3.14
5 is just an onion. So yesterday was Pi Day, right? This
6 was supposed to have been delivered yesterday, so I did
7 want to leave that pi joke in there, so -- 3/14, okay.

8 Okay. One programming note: today we
9 started at 8:00. Tomorrow we start a little bit later,
10 at 8:30. The technical sessions start at 8:30
11 tomorrow.

12 And finally, some thanks: to plan and
13 execute a conference of this magnitude requires the hard
14 work and dedication of many staff and contractors, and
15 this was especially challenging this year because of the
16 weather. And from the NRC, I would specifically like
17 to thank Lorna Kipfer, Bren Warren, and Susan Abraham,
18 the RIC meeting support team, as well as the Planning
19 and Technical Review Committee chaired by Rebecca
20 Tadesse and Chris Regan. I can't tell you how many
21 different versions of the agenda we developed over the
22 last four or five days to try and make sure that we were
23 able to be as accommodating to the weather, but also to
24 all the individuals that are here this week.

25 Certainly all of the session chairs,

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1 coordinators, and presenters, all of those involved in
2 developing and presenting the displays and the
3 tabletops, and then the volunteers from all across the
4 Agency for their contributions as room monitors,
5 registration assistants, and various other roles here
6 today. The Office of Administration for their support
7 in the areas of video conferencing, building security,
8 web streaming, photographic, graphic, technical
9 editing, printing, and reproduction services, and the
10 Office of the Chief Information Officer for all the
11 changes they helped us make to the website over the last
12 several days.

13 On the contractor side, Bethesda North
14 Marriott for their partnership in hosting this event;
15 Lead Management Consulting Inc. and Synergy Enterprises
16 for their planning, logistical, and IT expertise; and
17 BAV Audiovisual Services for their top-notch
18 audiovisual support. It takes a village to do this.

19
20 The talents of these folks and many others
21 help make this RIC a success. And then last and not
22 least, I do want to thank all of you here today for your
23 patience and participation. Without you, we do not
24 have a Regulatory Information Conference.

25 Now, it is with great pleasure that I

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1 introduce our keynote speaker today, NRC's Chairman
2 Kristine L. Svinicki. The Honorable Kristine Svinicki
3 was designated Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory
4 Commission by President Donald J. Trump on January 23rd,
5 2017. She was sworn in for her second term as a
6 Commissioner to a term ending on June 30th, 2017, and
7 her previous term as a Commissioner began on March 28th,
8 2008.

9 Ms. Svinicki has enjoyed a distinguished
10 career as a nuclear engineer at the U.S. Department of
11 Energy and as a policy advisor in the U.S. Senate,
12 advancing policies and initiatives regarding national
13 security, science, technology, energy, and the
14 environment. She has served on a number of expert
15 advisory panels and received the presidential citation
16 of the American Nuclear Society for her contributions
17 to U.S. nuclear policy. She is a graduate of the
18 University of Michigan, Big Ten tournament champions
19 and #7 seed. I think you might want to look at them if
20 you're filling out a bracket.

21 So I would like to introduce for her ninth
22 RIC and her first as Chairman of the NRC The Honorable
23 Kristine Svinicki.

24 (Applause.)

25 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Good morning,

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1 everyone. Thank you Bill for that introduction. I
2 want to begin by also extending my thanks to the NRC
3 staff that have had to adjust the schedule over the
4 course of this week. In my mind, I have taken to calling
5 this the Quick RIC because it is going to be a day and
6 a half, so I am very appreciative for everyone's
7 patience, but they really have gone above and beyond to
8 make sure that we could accommodate so much of the
9 program, so very very grateful for the long hours that
10 they have been putting in so far this week.

11 I am very pleased to take part in this
12 year's Regulatory Information Conference. I extend my
13 thanks to each of you for attending this session, and
14 also to those who might be tuning in to the webcast,
15 which might be a few additional people, given the change
16 in schedule. I want to add my thanks to the many NRC
17 employees who make this conference possible. As Bill
18 noted, it is a tremendous undertaking, and it is fueled
19 by the hard work of the NRC staff and the NRC staff also
20 who volunteer to just take part in making all of this
21 possible, and it is one of the reasons that we are able
22 to put on this successful conference.

23 I also would like to acknowledge our many
24 colleagues in attendance joining us from across the
25 country and around the world. Thank you for traveling

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1 the distances required to join us here this week. To
2 those of you whom I have met or spoken with or who have
3 welcomed me into your nuclear facilities over the course
4 of the past year, I thank you for adding to my journey
5 of continuous learning and for sharing your experiences
6 with me.

7 In the time since I stood before you at the
8 RIC last year, I have completed my visits to the
9 remaining U.S. nuclear power plants that I had not
10 previously visited. Now, it is not a particularly
11 impressive achievement as far as I am concerned because
12 it took me nine years to complete the task, but what I
13 have been impressed by are the thousands of women and
14 men who work at these plants, whether in operations,
15 engineering, maintenance, security, or management.
16 They are an impressive set of individuals, and I am
17 grateful for their daily contribution to the safety,
18 security, and energy resiliency of this country. As I
19 visited not only their plants, but the communities where
20 they live and work, I was reminded of how we can measure
21 the quality of our lives by what we give back to our
22 families, our communities, and each other.

23 I would also like to acknowledge the
24 presence of our important partners from other federal
25 and state agencies within the United States as well as

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1 the many international colleagues who are joining us
2 this week. The NRC's critical relationships with other
3 government entities and collaboration on lessons
4 learned with our international counterparts facilitate
5 the effective achievement of our mission. Thank you
6 for taking the time to be here, and, in some cases, for
7 agreeing to be a presenter at one of our technical
8 sessions.

9 Finally, I would like to acknowledge the
10 presence of my Commission colleagues, Commissioners
11 Baran and Burns. Good morning to you both. As we go
12 about our work both individually and collectively, I am
13 grateful to serve along two such -- alongside two such
14 fine individuals. Perhaps also in some small way, we
15 might serve as an example of what is possible when people
16 with different perspectives and sometimes differing
17 views unite nonetheless in a spirit of collegiality and
18 respect guided by our commitment to the organization
19 that we serve.

20 This is my ninth RIC speech, and at the end
21 of this month, I will begin my tenth year of service on
22 this Commission, but this year, for the first time, I
23 address the conference while designated as Chairman. I
24 am grateful to President Trump for having resided the
25 confidence in me to serve in this capacity during this

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1 period. I will give my full measure of effort to
2 carrying forward capably with the responsibilities
3 placed on me.

4 More directly, to the NRC staff, I want to
5 say that we know each other, we have worked together for
6 a very long time, and I am very humbled to serve as your
7 Chairman. And this much has not changed: as Chairman,
8 I will continue to serve you, the Commission, and the
9 collective work we do, steadfast in the belief that we
10 can continue to make an impact together.

11 My prepared remarks this year will be
12 brief. I want to leave some time for questions. The
13 remarks of our Executive Director for Operations,
14 Victor McCree, will follow mine, and he will provide a
15 more in-depth presentation of various Agency activities
16 and efforts. Therefore, I will not cover the same
17 ground. As has been mentioned, there are individuals
18 circulating in the aisles who can collect question cards
19 if you want to pass those down the row.

20 Now, as a Commissioner, it seemed that one
21 of my principal tasks at the RIC was to tell a joke. I
22 think I am still allowed to do this as Chairman, as long
23 as I make very clear that my colleagues do not provide
24 either an expressed or implied endorsement of this joke.
25 This joke is kind of special to me, and I actually

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1 brought the card with me. This -- this joke was
2 provided on a question card last year, and it is labeled
3 in a very descriptive way "A joke for the Commissioner's
4 use," in case I didn't understand that it was a joke for
5 my use.

6 (Laughter.)

7 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: And so to the person
8 who submitted it, which is -- there is no attribution
9 on here, if you're here this year, yes, I did save your
10 card in my desk drawer for an entire year. I also want
11 to note that I am a nuclear engineer by training, so I
12 am allowed to make this joke. So here goes.

13 How many nuclear engineers does it take to
14 change a lightbulb? Two: one to change the lightbulb,
15 and one to find a place to store it for 100,000 years.

16 (Laughter.)

17 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Somebody clapped.
18 That is amazing.

19 (Laughter.)

20 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I thought I got -- oh,
21 it is the person -- Mr. Dean says it's the person who
22 gave me the card last year --

23 (Laughter.)

24 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: -- and that could well
25 be. Okay.

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1 Well, I have reached a stage in my life
2 where I read obituaries recreationally, so -- now the
3 people laughing at that are the people who do the same
4 thing.

5 (Laughter.)

6 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: The people not
7 laughing think that I am very weird, but trust me, I
8 think at a certain stage in life, you may find yourself
9 doing the same thing. I think for me, put it under the
10 heading of research in terms of what does a life
11 well-lived look like when it is reflected on after it
12 is over and it is summarized in just a few paragraphs?

13 In this vein, I was reading a newsletter a
14 few months back from the North American Mongolia
15 Business Council, which is actually a newsletter I get.
16 Included in the newsletter was a tribute to a Vice
17 Chairman of the Council, Mr. James Peter "Pete" Morrow,
18 who had passed away, and who had had a big impact on the
19 organization. Now, I did not know this individual, but
20 the tribute in memoriam that was written to him in the
21 newsletter made a very deep impression on me.

22 It read in part as follows: "Pete believed
23 that every problem, no matter how large or daunting, had
24 an ethical solution, if only we work hard enough to find
25 it and work even harder to implement it. He inspired,

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1 motivated, and led others by work and example to embrace
2 a muscular optimism towards change. Although
3 brilliantly pragmatic, Pete always recognized that
4 change was a sedimentary process of consensus requiring
5 unrelenting persistence, patience, and persuasion.
6 Whatever he did and wherever he went, he kept his
7 conscience for his guide. He was the living truth of
8 the proposition that one man can make a difference."

9 Now, when I think about my particular view
10 of what kind of skills best serve us to succeed in a
11 changing world, the core truths stated here about Pete
12 Morrow for me cover it almost completely, and for those
13 of us who work in the realm of public policy, I think
14 it speaks to those core truths very clearly. The author
15 of the tribute reminds us that solutions will generally
16 elude us unless we work hard enough to find them and
17 harder still to implement them.

18 We are reminded also that the means to
19 inspire, motivate, and lead others come principally
20 through our own hard work and the example we set for
21 others. We are reminded that a muscular optimism
22 towards change might serve us well in this purpose.
23 Finally, the author of the tribute warns us that change
24 can be a sedimentary process, and that it will likely
25 require persistence, patience, and the application of

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1 the somewhat vanishing art of persuasion.

2 I believe for the NRC, the principles of
3 good regulation, independence, openness, efficiency,
4 clarity, and reliability, form a central part of the
5 fabric of our truth. Our responsibilities as a
6 regulator include working effectively with
7 stakeholders, clearly communicating our requirements,
8 and providing regulatory outcomes and information in an
9 efficient manner. In a changing world, our mission
10 remains unchanged, but our means to achieve this mission
11 must be continually optimized, adapted, and evolved
12 based on changing conditions and expectations.

13 How is the NRC adapting and optimizing?
14 The NRC remains focused on and committed to delivering
15 our safety and security mission in an efficient,
16 effective, and agile manner, but this in no way implies
17 contentment with the status quo. Our public outreach
18 to and engagement with those we regulate, public
19 policymakers, and the broader range of interested
20 stakeholders continues to provide valuable insights to
21 inform and shape many ongoing NRC program changes and
22 enhancements. These insights are continually factored
23 into the NRC's work.

24 For example, in the area of backfitting,
25 the Committee to Review Generic Requirements, or CRGR,

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1 has held public meetings, one as recently as last month,
2 to discuss the backfitting process. This past fall,
3 the Commission directed the NRC staff to revise Agency
4 guidance concerning the consideration of cost where
5 regulation is not necessary to ensure adequate
6 protection of public health and safety, and in
7 particular in applying the compliance exception to the
8 backfit rule. Specifically, the Commission directed
9 the staff to ensure consistency with the Commission's
10 direction in responding to the Executive Director for
11 Operations's tasking to the CRGR to review backfit
12 guidance, training, and knowledge management.

13 The Commission also directed the staff to
14 provide the revised backfitting guidance to the
15 Commission for its approval. In response, the NRC
16 staff is currently working to update the guidance that
17 supports its regulatory and backfit analyses. Over the
18 last year, the NRC has also enhanced the efficiency and
19 predictability of the nuclear reactor licensing
20 process, including clarifying management expectations
21 for licensing reviews; improving discipline in the
22 request for additional information process; enhancing
23 collaboration with stakeholders to identify any
24 unnecessary regulatory impediments to the advancement
25 of digital technology; refining the decommissioning

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1 transition process; and developing further
2 efficiencies in the review process for small, modular,
3 and advanced reactor technologies.

4 These and other efforts have supplemented
5 the Agency's Project Aim activities, through which,
6 among other things, the NRC is implementing
7 approximately \$48 million in reductions associated with
8 lower-priority work that can be shed, performed with
9 fewer resources, or performed with a different
10 priority. In addition, planning continues towards the
11 future consolidation of the Office of New Reactors with
12 the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. Moreover,
13 the NRC is working every day to -- to sustain the
14 improvements we have made to date and to identify
15 additional opportunities to improve processes that
16 accomplish our important mission in the most effective
17 way.

18 In the times to come, I am personally
19 confident that the NRC will be capable of rising to meet
20 any set of challenges. After nearly nine years here,
21 this is not just what I think, it is what I know. We
22 know better than anyone else what we do well and what
23 we can do better. It is my hope that we will
24 continuously apply this knowledge, that we will
25 continue to challenge ourselves and each other, and in

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1 so doing, that we will continue to set the standard of
2 regulatory excellence.

3 Having just used the word "hope" in that
4 last sentence, I want to close on that subject and on
5 the muscular optimism towards change referenced in Pete
6 Morrow's tribute or obituary. Another subject I tend
7 to address at the RIC in addition to jokes is literature.
8 Since I last spoke at the RIC, the book that has made
9 the deepest and most lasting impression on me is the book
10 Becoming Wise by Krista Tippett. She has a very popular
11 podcast in case any of you subscribe.

12 The -- the final chapter of her book is
13 entitled Hope, and it opens as follows: "In a century
14 of staggering open questions, hope becomes a calling for
15 those of us who can hold it for the sake of the world.
16 Hope is distinct in my mind from optimism or idealism.
17 It has nothing to do with wishing. It references
18 reality at every turn and reveres truth. It lives
19 open-eyed and wholehearted with the darkness that is
20 woven into the light of life and sometimes seems to
21 overcome it. Hope, like every virtue, is a choice that
22 becomes a practice that becomes spiritual muscle
23 memory. It is a renewable resource for moving through
24 life as it is, not as we wish it to be."

25 She writes "My mind inclines now more than

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1 ever towards hope. I am consciously shedding the
2 assumption that a skeptical point of view is the most
3 intellectually credible. Intellect does not function
4 in opposition to mystery. Tolerance is not more
5 pragmatic than love, and cynicism is not more reasonable
6 than hope. Unlike almost every worthwhile thing in
7 life, cynicism is easy. It judges things as they are,
8 but does not lift a finger to try to shift them. Hope,
9 in contrast, is an orientation, an insistence on
10 wresting wisdom and joy from the endlessly fickle fabric
11 of space and time. It is a privilege to hold something
12 robust and resilient called hope, which has the power
13 to shift the world on its axis."

14 I thank you for your kind attention and am
15 happy to take your questions.

16 (Applause.)

17 DIRECTOR DEAN: So Chairman, we do have a
18 few questions. They are pouring in. So here is the
19 first one, and this is probably one that we could have
20 anticipated: although the NRC is an independent agency,
21 what is expected from a number of the executive orders
22 that have required the Agency, for example, to create
23 any new rule, it must eliminate two existing rules?

24 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: The Agency has been
25 taking a very systematic look at -- at the executive

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1 orders as they have been issued. As an independent
2 agency, in the strictest sense, we are in some ways
3 beyond the reach of the specific measures in some of
4 those orders, but I think as an Agency, we look also to
5 the spirit and the intent of various executive orders.

6 A curious story about one of the effects of
7 becoming Chairman was that I actually moved offices, so
8 I was cleaning out a number of the reference materials
9 I had accumulated, and I noticed that I had executive
10 orders on regulatory reform from President Obama. I
11 had executive orders on regulatory reform themes from
12 President Bush. And if I had been at NRC long enough,
13 I am sure I would have had some from the reinventing
14 government era of President Clinton.

15 So I think that this is not entirely new,
16 that there have been themes of looking at greater
17 efficiency and effectiveness in regulatory matters, and
18 I think that the NRC has a -- a continuous learning and
19 improvement culture that, you know, we take that, and
20 it may be in a strict sense that some of the measures
21 are not applicable to our Agency, but we can always be
22 looking at the spirit and objective of those matters,
23 and we do. That is the history of NRC.

24 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. Thank you,
25 Chairman. There is a question about the function of the

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1 Commission affected by the two vacancies, and do you
2 anticipate when the seats would be filled?

3 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I think the
4 administration is turning to vacancies at various
5 boards and commissions, and, you know, as effectively
6 and efficiently as they can, so I continue to work
7 forward with an assumption that recommendations and
8 nominations for vacancies are likely in process, and I
9 think in the coming months, we would see that.

10 I don't find any diminishment in our
11 ability to conduct our business at our three. You know,
12 we look forward to the arrival of new members always,
13 but I think that we have been moving through things with
14 good efficiency and dispatch.

15 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. So the next
16 question is I assume from one of our international
17 guests: you have noted the importance of sharing
18 international best practices. What impacts will the
19 NRC budget cuts and the new administration's foreign
20 policy posture have on NRC's international cooperation
21 and assistance activities in the coming years?

22 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, I think first of
23 all, we are yet to see any specific levels of impact,
24 so some of these matters are still under evaluation. I
25 think though that it is not unusual for government

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1 departments and agencies to have to look at a tighter
2 prioritization of activities. I am confident that the
3 NRC will continue to be able to pursue and collaborate
4 on the most important measures before us and -- and so
5 I -- I think if we have to look at some
6 re-prioritization, we will do that, but I think the core
7 of our collaboration will certainly continue.

8 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. So here is a
9 question associated with advanced reactors and new
10 reactors: do you believe that Part 52 has had the
11 streamlining and efficiency improvements originally
12 envisioned?

13 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I think that -- that
14 the Agency has already engaged in at least one lessons
15 learned snapshot in time of Part 52. We have not gone
16 all the way through the entirety of Part 52, so there
17 is still some parts of it that have yet to be exercised
18 as we move through the ITAAC process at Vogtle and
19 Summer, and we have already looked again at one lessons
20 learned review. We have had some outcomes from that.

21 I think, you know, I continue to be
22 supportive of the fact that both Part 50 and Part 52 are
23 available depending on what an applicant would like to
24 pursue. I think that depending on the attributes of the
25 technology, there may be aspects of Part 50 that would

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1 be desirable, and so I think that it is a strength of
2 our regulatory framework that both options continue to
3 exist.

4 DIRECTOR DEAN: So expanding upon
5 discussions of new and advanced reactors, here is a
6 question regarding -- it was written specifically, but
7 I think this could be broadened: how will the NRC view
8 design certification activities from different
9 countries for non-light water reactor technologies, and
10 is there any collaboration already underway?

11 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, on the margins
12 of this conference, there are a tremendous number of
13 meetings that we have with our international regulatory
14 counterparts. Just yesterday, I know my colleagues and
15 I met with a number of our colleagues. I discussed with
16 at least a couple of my international peers in from other
17 countries things that they are undertaking, perhaps
18 types of phased reviews in licensing.

19 I think that the U.S. NRC will continue to
20 look with great interest at the efforts of other
21 countries. Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety
22 Commission is undertaking some reviews of novel
23 technologies right now, and -- and I am certain, as is
24 our culture, we will continue to cultivate whatever
25 efficiencies that can be brought forward in that

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1 process, so I think we will keep a close eye on that and
2 continue to collaborate, and -- and where someone
3 demonstrates something that we think would be very
4 beneficial to the U.S., I am sure we will look at that
5 with interest.

6 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. So I have a number
7 of cards here associated with risk-informed approaches
8 to regulatory decision-making. I am going to read one
9 that I think perhaps summarizes broadly what was in a
10 lot of the questions.

11 But basically, the Commission's
12 established policy is to apply risk-informed approaches
13 to regulatory oversight, but in practice, licensees
14 frequently experience some NRC staff preferring to rely
15 on deterministic approaches, for example Fire PRA.
16 What do you see as the biggest obstacle to fully
17 embracing risk-informed principles throughout the
18 Agency, and how do you address what could be a cultural
19 problem within the Agency?

20 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, I think that the
21 -- I observe that NRC's journey to risk-informed
22 regulation is something that -- that moves forward as
23 a journey, and I think that, to the extent that there
24 are impediments or obstacles to truly risk-informed
25 decision-making on any specific matter, it is likely

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1 that the challenges are specific to the case that is
2 before the Agency, so I think it is very hard to
3 generalize.

4 There is a culture element. I am sure that
5 that is true, but I think that a lot of what we try to
6 address is down in the specifics, so I think it is just
7 continuing to evolve the regulatory framework to risk
8 inform the regulations themselves, and then to drive the
9 mindset and paradigm that people bring a truly
10 risk-informed approach to the work I think is just a
11 continuing evolution for NRC. I know it has been going
12 on for some time, but I just see it as being more of a
13 journey than something that happens in one fell swoop.

14 DIRECTOR DEAN: And then I will ask you one
15 -- one follow-up question related to risk-informed
16 initiatives: what are your views in terms of what you
17 consider to be the most pressing or important
18 risk-informed initiatives that the Agency is or should
19 pursue?

20 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Well, I don't know if
21 others would categorize this issue as a risk-informed
22 issue, but digital instrumentation and control is
23 something that is very front of mind for me, and the
24 imperative here is an urgency in timing imperative that
25 has to do with general obsolescence issues that are

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1 somewhat unavoidable and are going to proceed whether
2 or not the regulator can be made to be comfortable with
3 digital I&C application, so I would -- you know, without
4 being overly critical of any particular NRC staff, I
5 would say that I think we need to continue to put urgency
6 on risk-informed approaches to digital I&C.

7 I know it requires a paradigm shift and it
8 is hard for our experts in some ways to be made
9 comfortable, but I think that it is not a question of
10 if we can become comfortable as a regulator. It is a
11 when statement about the fact that we just -- we really
12 need to be able to develop workable paradigms for that.

13 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay.

14 (Applause.)

15 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. Some applause
16 there.

17 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: There's a digital I&C
18 constituency out there, or an obsolescence
19 constituency, I don't know which.

20 (Laughter.)

21 DIRECTOR DEAN: So this question is I guess
22 related to the Agency's openness and transparency, but
23 as Chair, what would be -- what is your planned approach
24 for dealing with or communicating with the press?

25 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: Gosh, I don't know. I

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1 mean, I know we have -- what I observe is a very
2 responsive public affairs organization. I think they
3 participate in a lot of our public meetings to make
4 certain that the media's requests are responded to.

5 I know often for media, they need things to
6 be communicated not in so much of the heavy jargon that
7 we have. I am sure the public appreciates that as well.
8 But I know of instances where we put experts on the phone
9 and they step through issues so that they can kind of
10 be broken down into their component parts and made a bit
11 more understandable, so when I read our press clippings,
12 I feel like we're getting kind of layperson common
13 sense, the core messages are going out, so I observe that
14 to be effective.

15 There is a point at which you lose some of
16 the meaning and nuance. I think that can be difficult
17 for scientists and technical experts to navigate, but
18 I do think that we try to provide the training and
19 background to staff so that they understand that not
20 everyone is in this field of profession, and so we need
21 to try to make things understandable.

22 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. So here is a
23 question. We have time maybe for a couple more, but I
24 do want to ask this question. The individual wrote that
25 they noticed an absence of pop culture references in

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1 your speech, and so the question is what do you think
2 about this season of Walking Dead?

3 (Laughter.)

4 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I can elaborate on
5 this if -- if you catch me outside of the session, but
6 I would say that I -- I am behind one episode, so I am
7 not going to do any spoilers. Other people may be more
8 behind than me. But I know it was a really rough start
9 to the season, and I have, like most people, a community
10 of other viewers that, you know, we tweet -- we text each
11 other during the show and things like that.

12 But I know some people dropped out just
13 because of the brutality at the beginning of this
14 season, but I just really -- if you have got it on your
15 DVR, hang in there because we got back to more of kind
16 of the character journey later. It started out, it was
17 rough to watch with Negan. It was tough, but, you know,
18 hang in there because the character stuff that you love
19 kind of maybe Episode 3 or Episode 4 of the season came
20 back in.

21 DIRECTOR DEAN: I do want to point out to
22 the audience that the Chairman does not have a replica
23 of Lucille in her office.

24 (Laughter.)

25 DIRECTOR DEAN: Does not.

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1 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: That is quite an image
2 to give people.

3 DIRECTOR DEAN: All right. Time for two
4 more questions, Chairman.

5 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I would say, you know,
6 The Walking Dead, that is very serious stuff. Thank you
7 for whoever asked that. That is important.

8 (Laughter.)

9 DIRECTOR DEAN: Yes. As the Department of
10 Energy fills out leadership slots, what kind of nuclear
11 expertise do you believe is needed at the agency?

12 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: You know, I have some
13 Department of Energy association, as did former
14 Commissioner Ostendorff, so we have quite a few insights
15 about some of the continuing expert staff at DOE.

16 I -- I offer a broad compliment to the
17 Office of Nuclear Energy at the Department of Energy.
18 In the Senior Executive Service there, they have a core
19 of individuals with decades-worth of technology
20 development experience, and I have a really deep respect
21 for a lot of those folks that I have known for many years.
22 So I think, you know, political leadership is more
23 fluid, of course, across the course of time, and it is,
24 as it is at NRC, as Commissioners come and go, the Senior
25 Executive Service longstanding agency experts that

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1 really provide the continuity. So I am confident that
2 the administration will pick people with, you know, a
3 very strong public policy orientation.

4 I am -- maybe this is a bit -- kind of a
5 controversial view, but my view is at the highest
6 political levels, you are really kind of doing more
7 public policy or energy policy than you are -- you don't
8 need to be kind of out-experting the experts at
9 departments and agencies. They are still there to
10 carry forward on that work.

11 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. And so the last
12 question for you this morning, Chairman, the NRC has
13 been implementing the Aim program to make NRC more
14 efficient. Now that the Trump administration is
15 imposing additional cuts and regulatory reductions,
16 what will be your approach, aside from your Aim program,
17 to address these new objectives?

18 CHAIRMAN SVINICKI: I talked in my
19 prepared remarks about my confidence in the NRC, and
20 that wasn't just a platitude. I said it was not just
21 what I thought, it is what I know.

22 The NRC is an amazingly capable
23 organization. Now, capability is not achievement.
24 Capability is married with will, and then those two
25 things yield achievement. So I want to say though

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1 without capability, it is very very difficult to get
2 where you want to go.

3 NRC has been engaged in Project Aim. I
4 don't see that as a negative in terms of overall drive
5 within the administration maybe to look for greater
6 efficiencies in government. I think it stands the NRC
7 in very good stead that we have already been engaged in
8 this type of effort, and truth to tell, even though
9 Project Aim was created under Chairman Macfarlane's
10 leadership and has been continued by the current
11 Commission, it is really kind of a continuous
12 improvement culture at NRC that even precedes Project
13 Aim, and I talked about other administrations coming in
14 and looking at making regulatory agencies perhaps more
15 efficient and effective, so I think it is really an
16 ongoing thing.

17 And I think, you know, as I noted in my talk,
18 we do have the Project Aim implementation underway, but
19 the staff has a very firm commitment to continue to look
20 for and implement improvements to our processes, and
21 that -- they have really taken ownership of that beyond
22 anything that the Commission has directed them to do,
23 so I think this -- you know, NRC has an opportunity to
24 really stand as a model for these types of efforts,
25 partly because we had already begun to do this type of

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1 work, but partly because we do have this continuous
2 improvement and continuous learning culture, and that
3 is what I refer to as an evolving set of expectations
4 for government.

5 I think that citizens tend to continue to
6 expect improved performance from departments and
7 agencies, and the good news for NRC is that that is
8 already part of our self-examination. And so I think
9 we will continue that journey, you know, in the future
10 as administrations come and go. That is part of the
11 incorporated culture of NRC.

12 DIRECTOR DEAN: Okay. Thank you,
13 Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, Chairman Kristine
14 Svinicki.

15 (Applause.)

16 (Whereupon, the first portion of the
17 meeting went off the record at 8:48 a.m.)
18

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