

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

BRIEFING ON EEO PROGRAM

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9:30 a.m.

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P R

O C E E D I N G S

9:30 a.m.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Good morning. The Commission meets this morning to hear the current status of the agency's Equal Employment Opportunity program. The goals of this program are to foster equal opportunity for all employees for job opportunities to encourage diversity and to prohibit discrimination of any kind. This is a very major objective of the agency in that it is we are centrally dependent upon our staff and it is in turn in our interest and the agency's interest in assuring that we get the benefit of all the insights from all of our staff that we can obtain. We look forward to hearing your report on progress in this area. Let me turn to Dr. Travers to get us started.

DR. TRAVERS: Thank you Chairman Meserve and good morning Commissioners. Good morning everyone. Glad you could come. We're certainly pleased to be here today to provide the Commission with the status to discuss some of the progress some of the continuing challenges that we've have and have made with the agency's EEO program. Before we proceed, let me introduce those at the table and some of the important people who are joining us just in the bullpen at the rear. On my right is Paul Bird who's Director of the Office of Human Resources who's sitting in for Pat Norry who couldn't be with us today. Next to Paul is Irene Little who is the Director of the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights. Next to her of course is Jim McDermott who is the Deputy Director of the Office of Human Resources. On my left is Stu Reiter, NRC's Acting Chief Information Officer who will discuss today implementation of the EEO program in his office and Charlie Cox who is Chair of the Committee on Age Discrimination who will provide a perspective of employee issues. Also participating in the briefing and seated just behind me are Mike Cullingford who is the Vice Chair of the Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee, Vonna Ordaz who is the Chair of the Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee, Brian Thomas who is the Co-Chair of the African American Advisory Committee, Linda Suttora who is the Chair of the Federal Women's Advisory Committee, Bobby Abu-Eid who is the Co-Chair of the Joint Labor-Management EEO Committee and also joining us is Dale Yeilding of the NTEU. Since the last EEO briefing we have been pursuing several strategies to advance the agencies equal employment opportunity and diversity goals. I'd like to briefly highlight two areas of emphasis that I believe are key to the success of the EEO program. The first involves the management teams responsibility and accountability really for advancing EEO and diversity at NRC. The second involves our efforts to help ensure that all NRC employees understand their role in achieving our EEO and diversity goals. Managing diversity and achievement of our EEO goals is an ongoing process which will continue to require a cooperative effort by the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights, the Office of Human Resources, all agency managers and all of our employees. However, we recognize that managers clearly have a principal role in obtaining mission related results while at the same time creating a positive work environment, developing staff and creating and maintaining open dialogue with all members of the staff. To increase emphasis on managers role in the NRC since our last briefing we have modified the contracts of all SES managers by putting into place a separate subelement for evaluating EEO performance, the subelement outlines criteria for fostering a discrimination free work environment, including achievement of objectives consistent with the agencies affirmative employment plan, diversity initiatives and the EEO process. Management support of EEO is key to ensuring that we achieve inclusion of all employees including minorities, women, and persons with disabilities in every facet of NRC's workplace and work life activities. Moving to the second area of emphasis which is the role of employees in achieving our EEO and diversity goals, we have taken an important step in raising employee awareness of the value of a diverse work force. All employees have completed diversity training and provisions have been made on an ongoing basis to provide diversity training sessions for new employees. The diversity training was designed to enhance employee understanding of the impact that a diverse work force has on achieving the agencies strategic objectives and to enhance all employees awareness of their respective roles in creating a positive work environment. As I have indicated in previous briefings one of our greatest challenges

continues to be and will continue to be the effective management of a diverse work force. We must continue to seek ways to enhance diversity and capitalize on the talents of our employees in an environment that improves continuously, is inclusive, and ensures that employee contributions are valued, recognized, and supported. And what I will now do is turn to Paul who is going to discuss some of the significant activities that have occurred since the last briefing.

MR. BIRD: Thank you very much Bill. As Dr. Travers has stated, since the last EEO briefing we have implemented several initiatives to address some of our most challenging EEO issues. I will highlight two of these initiatives. The first is focused recruitment and the second is a proposed new training program to develop staff for leadership positions. I'll also discuss several government-wide directives, executives orders, that could have some impact on NRC's EEO policies, procedures and practices.

An ongoing challenge throughout the Federal service has been the significant under representation of Hispanic employees in the workforce. Since fiscal 95 the percentage of Hispanics in NRC's workforce has been approximately 2% ranging from a high of 66 Hispanic employees in 96 to a low of 62 at the end of 98. Today I'm pleased to say the NRC staff includes 71 Hispanic employees which is approximately 3% of the current NRC workforce. In our efforts to further increase the representation of Hispanic employees in the NRC workforce new strategies have recently been employed. Several months ago Pat Norry convened a team of NRC staff members from SBCR, HR and the Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee to develop an innovative approach for improving our efforts to recruit Hispanic employees. Significant results of this initiative included plans for a highly focused recruitment effort at the University of Puerto Rico to be led by the Office of Human Resources and fully supported by NRC senior managers and members of the Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee. Luis Reyes, Regional Administrator of Region II, participated in all phases of this recruitment initiative and has played a significant role in it's success. This approach included acceleration of the application and candidate review process, group invitational travel to NRC locations for interviews for a selected group of highly qualified applicants and the use of on the spot hiring authority to extend employment offers to the best qualified of these candidates. As a result of this focused recruitment effort, along with staff recruitment at the National Image Conference and Career Fair and other recruitment events, a total of 22 offers were extended to Hispanic candidates. To date, in 2001, 10 of these Hispanic candidates have accepted NRC offers and are scheduled to enter on duty later this year. This number we believe will increase. As time rolls along these students, some graduate in January, some will graduate in June, and we're expecting even better results than the 10 that we now have acceptances from. The focused effort is the kind of strategy that we needed to attract highly qualified and diverse applicants. Another initiative I want to discuss is training and development of staff for supervisory and leadership positions. This year we will be soliciting nominations for a new leadership potential program to help prepare staff at the GG-13 through 15 grade levels for future NRC supervisory and leadership positions. This program is planned to open for competition in the second quarter of this year and is scheduled to begin in May of 2001 for about 20 to 24 participants. The program is designed for employees who aspire to move into supervisory positions and or to develop their leadership skills. I also want to mention several recently issued Executive Orders which have been signed by the President which include mandates that could have some impact on our EEO program. The first of these Executive Orders requires educational programs in Federal agencies to follow the same principles of non-discrimination in state and local governments and private institutions. This Executive Order adds "status as parent, and sexual orientation" as bases of discrimination and expands the bases on which employees may file discrimination complaints. Two other Executive Orders require agencies to increase employment opportunities for persons which disabilities. NRC's implementation plan for these Executive Orders was issued on September 15, 2000 with a hiring advancement goal of 10 qualified individuals with disabilities over the next five years. Another Executive Order signed in August of 2000 requires agencies to develop a plan to improve access to all Federal agencies by persons who are not proficient in the English language. NRC's draft plan in response to this Executive Order was submitted to the Department of Justice on December 11, 2000. Although this Executive Order did not directly apply to NRC employees it will require an NRC plan that mandates educational institutions and state and local agencies that receive Federal financial assistance from NRC to ensure that potential clients with limited English proficiency have equal access to these benefits or services. Finally, an Executive Order signed October 12, 2000 requires agencies to eliminate systemic barriers to recruitment and career development of Hispanics. As discussed earlier our new efforts to recruit Hispanics has been successful. The enhanced recruitment techniques used for this effort will be used to improve our overall hiring efforts. Other strategies being considered include the use of a buddy system which is designed and this is very important to maintain close communication with applicants throughout the review process. Revisions in our offer letters incorporating projected salary growth over several years and enhanced marketing of NRC's employee training, development and benefits options will be used as a new marketing approach to try to attract candidates. The EDO recently approved the use of recruitment bonuses as hiring incentives for entry level selections. I believe the continued implementation of these initiatives and the new government-wide directives will help ensure that we maintain a competitive edge with other Federal agencies and with the private sector to meet our hiring objectives as well as our EEO and diversity goals. I would now like to turn to Irene to provide a summary of the progress in the EEO area.

MS. LITTLE: Thank you Paul. Before I make my statement I would ask Charlie Cox to give the employee perspective. He's representing the EEO Advisory Committees. Charlie.

MR. COX: Thank you Irene. Good morning. The Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committees continue to appreciate these opportunities to brief the Commission. These briefings are important for the agency's goal of identifying EEO issues and defining recommendations to address those issues. First the committee would like to acknowledge some of the progress that Dr. Travers and Mr. Bird has already mentioned. The specific subelement that was added to the Senior Executive Service managers elements and standards that accesses their EEO performance. That has been a recommendation from the committees in the past and I'm very glad to see that happen and enforcing this or using that to measure their efforts still remains one of our top issues. The target of recruitment appears to be very successful and one of our recommendations is to continue to use them for other areas. Another success was the recent managing diversity training. This training should lead to a better understanding by employees and managers of the agency's managing diversity process and its goals. Diversity Day was another success which for the first time featured a panel on aging issues. In addition the office directors of Nuclear Regulatory Regulation and Nuclear Materials Safety and Safeguards has met with the individual committee chairs and members within their organizations and it took the opportunity to describe their considerable EEO efforts. And finally, as a catch here I'd especially like to thank the Chairman for the Yellow Announcement on Older American Month last May. The committees continue to appreciate small business civil rights, human resources and the office directors efforts in pursuing and implementing these positive measures. The following are the top issues and recommendations by the committees. Developing these top issues I think demonstrates the spirit of the diversity program where you have distinct and separate groups working together to solve common problems and achieve common goals. The first recommendation is to increase representation of women, minorities, persons with disabilities, for management, supervisory, professional and technical positions. Also increase representation of women, minorities, persons with disabilities and persons over 40 for rotational assignments. The continued target and recruitment we think has been demonstrated to be very effective. Encourage the establishment of additional upward mobility positions to provide opportunities for advancement for lower graded employees and as a recruitment and retention tool enhance marketing and management support for employee welfare and family friendly initiatives. As mentioned earlier continue to hold managers and supervisors accountable for the EEO performance of the appraisal system, encourage fair performance appraisals. In past briefings particular groups are noted as having lower percentage of outstanding appraisals. Continue to provide EEO training for all employees and managers, and to provide a better tool for our reviewers analyses, the Office of Personnel should provide the committees with sanitized data, no names or social security numbers on performance appraisals. And

finally, to develop a process to capture valuable corporate knowledge of staff especially of older workers. So in conclusion the EEO Advisory Committee and subcommittees appreciate the support the Commission, the EDO, and Small Business and Civil Rights has given to the committees' issues as reflected by this year's successes and we continue to welcome your continued support for our top issues. Thank you.

MS. LITTLE: Thank you Charlie. We really appreciate the committees identifying progress that we've made. It's also gratifying to know that there's still a lot to do so I have a job this year because there's a lot of things that we need to do. Our EEO program is designed around four guiding principles. That's the framework that we use to communicate, articulate, monitor and implement and measure our EEO progress. I will talk about the program's progress over the last fiscal year, fiscal year 2000, within those four guiding principles. The first guiding principle is: to create a workplace environment that is free of discrimination and is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Dr. Travers highlighted the new subelement for evaluating the EEO performance of SES managers. The corollary to accountability is making sure that managers are trained to do what they are expected to do. To ensure that managers maintain up to date information regarding new developments in EEO and diversity, a variety of EEO related courses are routinely provided. Four different courses were provided to managers during fiscal year 2000. These included discussions on how to provide constructive feedback to non-selected job applicants, a critical piece of a discrimination free workplace. How to write performance standards and elements and how to evaluate employees' performance systematically and equitably. Members of my staff teamed up with staff from HR to revise the course entitled "EEO and Sexual Harassment Prevention for Managers and Supervisors". The revised course includes the latest development on preventing sexual harassment, on providing reasonable accommodations, the new EEO complaint process including the alternative dispute resolution process, and managing diversity. This course is required for all new supervisors and current managers and supervisors are encouraged to attend the course. Resolving allegations of discrimination is another critical aspect of a discrimination free workplace. While the number of formal complaints generally is not a valid indicator of the quality of a work environment, how managers respond to complaints generally do reflect the quality of the workplace. In FY 2000, sixteen formal discrimination complaints were filed. This represents a flat line from FY 1999, proportionately a very low number of complaints in comparison to other Federal agencies. We attribute this relatively low level of complaint activity in part to the effective role that the EEO counselors play in facilitating informal resolution of the EEO issues and to the willingness of managers to work with the counselors to resolve issues. Additionally, in January 2000, we implemented the alternative dispute resolution phase of the discrimination complaint process. ADR provides a neutral environment to facilitate discussion and settlement of issues by the complainant and the management officials. As managers and employees learn more about this process, we believe ADR will become a favorite tool for resolving issues amicably and building more effective working relationships between managers and employees. The EEO advisory committees also play a role in maintaining a discrimination free work environment. They provide advice and recommendations regarding issues of fairness and equity in the workplace and they contribute to our ability to identify and resolve issues. As Charlie stated during his presentation, the committees have identified several issues that employees feel are important. The Office of Small Business and Civil Rights and Human Resources are working with the committees to address these concerns. On issues related to employment of persons with disabilities, NRC's commitment has consistently been supportive, however, based on new Federal mandates and our own internal assessment, we have identified a need for more attention in this area. The Human Resources office has developed a plan which outlines new strategies to be pursued in attracting persons with disabilities. These strategies include: additional use of job sharing and alternative work schedules, using different methods and formats to disseminate information throughout the agency (for example, the use of a TDD telephone for deaf employees and applicants) and incorporating on vacancy announcements a statement regarding NRC's commitment to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified applicants. Additionally, we are working on a procedure to provide quicker responses to employee's requests for accommodations. Guiding principle number two is: ensure that agency policies, processes and procedures provide all employees the opportunity to participate in mission accomplishment and to compete fairly and equitably for career enhancement and advancement. I believe the agency is continuously improving its implementation of human resource management programs consistent with the goals and objectives of EEO. Examples include: the new leadership development program that Paul mentioned to train individuals for supervisory and management positions, development of agency plans to recruit Hispanics, the plan to increase opportunities for persons with disabilities, and the new subelement to measure management's EEO performance and hold managers accountable. Guiding principle number three is to employ a competent and highly skilled workforce representative at all levels of America's diversity and enable employees to accomplish the agency's mission by providing support, tools, and a positive work environment. One of the agency's corporate management strategies is to recruit, hire and retain a high quality diverse workforce. It has been consistently demonstrated that entry level and intern recruitment increases the pool of highly qualified, diverse applicants available to the agency. During fiscal year 2000, the agency established a goal to hire at least 25% of new employees at the entry level. The number of hires in fiscal year 2000 was 161. 132 of these hires were professionals and 12 of the professional hires were entry level. Clearly we did not achieve our goal of 25% in fiscal year 2000, however, Dr. Travers has met with the managers and reemphasized the importance of increasing our efforts to attempt to achieve this goal in 2001. The summer intern program and cooperative education program targets students from a cross section of colleges and universities and seek to encourage their interest in employment with the NRC. The fiscal year 2000 summer program, while successful in attracting 44 students (12 minorities, 14 white women, and 18 white men) we have increased the number of institutions with which we have cooperative agreements. As a result, we anticipate an increase in co-op hires in 2001. We will continue to utilize creative recruitment strategies and develop strong liaisons with colleges and universities to attract a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates. The fourth principle is to recognize, appreciate and value diversity thereby demonstrating trust, respect and concern for the welfare of all employees within the agency. To facilitate this principle, the managing diversity process is ongoing in the agency. With the 27 sessions of managing diversity conducted to date, we have introduced most of NRC employees to the concept of managing diversity and we've offered some tools for application in the workplace. My staff and I are working with offices on follow up efforts to further open lines of communication to enhance employee's and manager's understanding of ways to value employee diversity and leverage workplace diversity to enhance individual and organizational performance. Our review of performance appraisals for fiscal year 1999 shows some disparity in fully successful and outstanding ratings of employees over age 56 and in some minority groups. We will continue to review demographic trends in performance appraisals. Detailed information about the appraisal ratings are included in the briefing paper in Attachment 2 on pages 15 through 19 if you're interested in more detail. The percentage of awards given to each employee group is similar to the percentage of the employee representation in the workforce except for Asian Pacific American employees. In that case, the percentage of awards to this group shows some disparity between the percentage given and their representation in the workforce. My office will continue to monitor this trend, and encourage enhanced management awareness and focus on this area to ensure that there is no disparity here. The EEO advisory committees, with assistance from the Office of Human Resources and my office, developed and disseminated a survey during fiscal year 2000 to obtain employee input regarding a diversity day celebration in lieu of the various special emphasis programs. A majority of the respondents indicated their preference for an annual diversity day and that has been scheduled for July 10, 2001. We are open to participation by many employees in the planning and implementation of our first major diversity day. In conclusion, we believe we have put in place strategies that can effectively enhance our workforce diversity and that managers and employees are aware of their responsibilities in helping to achieve EEO and diversity goals to maximize individual and organizational performance. Our emphasis will be on monitoring implementation of these strategies and providing appropriate feedback that facilitates continuous improvement in the agency's EEO program. For example, we will take lessons learned from our recruitment strategy for Hispanics and apply those to focus recruitment throughout the agency. We will use the co-op

and summary intern programs to introduce students to the NRC and to encourage their interest in permanent employment with us. We will maximize the use of entry level hiring to achieve our 25% goal. We will continue our efforts to institutionalize the managing diversity process providing appropriate orientation to new employees and new managers and we will continue to encourage employees who make allegations of discrimination to seriously consider mediation as a means of resolving the issue. This concludes my presentation.

MR. BIRD: I'd now like to call on Stu Reiter, the Acting Chief Information Officer, to talk about some EEO progress in his office. Stu.

MR. REITER: Thank you, Paul. I welcome this opportunity to give the Commission an overview of the Office of Chief Information Officer equal employment opportunity program. I and the staff of the office fully support the agency's EEO goals and diversity policies and we are proud of the accomplishments in this important area. After a brief summary of some of the office's demographic profile, I'll discuss some of the initiatives and accomplishments and challenges associated with our EEO program. The office has 170 employees. Of the 170 employees, 45, or 26%, are minority and 125, or 74%, are Caucasian. There are 83 females and 87 males, 49%-51% split. The 30 minority women we have represent 15% of the staff. 19 minority men represent 11% of the staff. 57 white women represent 34% of the staff and 68 white men represent the remaining 40% of our staff. We have 17 supervisors and managers, 2 are African-American, 2 are Asian-Pacific, and 6 are women, including two members of the Senior Executive Service. We have 13 team leaders. 4 are white females and 3 are African-American men. In fiscal year 2000 we hired 10 new employees. 3 were white female, 1 was an African-American female and 1 was an Asian-Pacific male who was hired into a key branch manager position. A high priority of the office is to recognize individuals whose performance set an example of achieving excellence in the workplace. To accomplish this, we have in place an awards review committee composed of Division Directors to ensure consistency and equity in the award process. In addition, the union through its representatives on our office labor-management partnership committee reviews and comments on our awards. During fiscal year 2000, the office presented 110 performance awards to its employees. Minorities received 24% and Caucasians 76% of these awards. The office also recognizes exemplary performance throughout the year with Special Act and Instant Cash awards for employees who completed assignments by demonstrating dedication and initiative. During fiscal year 2000 we presented 125 Special Act and Instant Cash awards of which 23% were given to minority and 77% to Caucasian. In addition to the standard Performance Awards, Special Act awards, and Instant Cash awards, we have instituted an OCIO team player award to recognize those who demonstrate positive supportive attitudes, share knowledge, skills and advice freely, encourage and facilitate cooperation of others, establish effective working relationships with others, and make a significant contribution towards the achievement of the office goals. Those who are nominated for this award are nominated by their peers within the office. Two team player awards have been awarded this past year. One was awarded to a white male and the other to a white female. The office continues also to be attentive to the development of its employees and continues to provide wide opportunity for staff to participate in development of assignments. Last year we promoted ten employees: three minority women, one a minority male, and two were white women. The remaining four were white males. We also facilitated rotational assignments of 19 employees of which 6 were minority and 13 were Caucasian. We encourage our staff to develop individual development plans, what's commonly known as the IDP, to help establish well thought-out career goals and a plan to follow until they obtain their goals. We also encourage them to modify the plan as they progress or perhaps decide over time that they would like to switch to a different career. We have worked with the Small Business and Civil Rights staff to ensure that our staff knows the opportunities available and the benefits of participating in the agency's mentoring program. This program is one of the keys, we believe, to successful implementation of an IDP. I am pleased that we have had several employees who as part of the development plans obtained college degrees in information technology fields and have seen their hard work and perseverance result in successful entry into professional technical field and indeed have advanced in the field. I was pleased this past November to see Cynthia Dekle of our staff honored as a graduate of the General Services Administration 1K by 2K program. The GSA initiated this program several years ago to pursue having a thousand government professionals who were in a masters degree program additionally certified in information technology or information management specialties by the year 2000. Miss Dekle graduated last December from the University of Maryland in information systems management. Miss Dekle worked for many years in our central word processing unit before her hard work earned her a professional position in information technology and she gives much credit for the advancement of her education and career to employing the IDP process and the NRC's mentoring program. I had hoped that Miss Dekle could be in the audience today but I think she had a long-planned vacation to celebrate the completion of her degree work. The office supports needs for staff with disabilities. We supply employees with special needs with equipment such as monitors and tracking balls and we have reviewed our public website for compliance with Federally mandated disability access requirements. We are trying to improve the morale and improve the working environment for our employees. I have regular brown bag lunches with small groups of employees in my office to become acquainted with them and to learn of their concerns. We also hold quarterly meetings for all OCIO employees to allow them to ask questions, share information, recognize staff achievements, and provide OCIO employees an opportunity to better understand what is going on the office and the agency, and in fact several of you have participated in these meetings and our award ceremonies and provided our employees the opportunities to ask their questions or share their concerns with you directly which we appreciate and we will continue to ask for your support in our all hands meetings. Communications between managers and staff continue throughout the year. The Office Division Directors and Branch Chiefs have regular staff meetings to exchange information, encourage staff to ask questions, and recognize their staff's achievements. I have personally met several times with Irene Little and her staff to find ways of educating our staff on diversity goals of the agency and raising our awareness of associated issues. Miss Little and Miss Williams have met with many of my staff at all levels within the organization, both individually and as a group, to raise their awareness of diversity goals and issues. In conclusion, I am confident that our activities and plans will help improve both the morale and the working environment of our employees. I'm aware and the office is aware this is a continuing challenge and we continue to meet with my managers and supervisors to ensure that the office makes offices a desirable and diversity aware place to work and we thank you for the opportunity to share this with you.

DR. TRAVERS: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, that completes our presentation this morning.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Good. I'd like to thank you all for a very helpful and informative presentation on a very important subject and its clear that what described that we've made a lot of progress. This is report in which important gains that you've made in the area of training, you've described processes that are improved that are dealing with issues, and in the recruitment area that it's clear and particularly in dealing with recruitment of Hispanics that you've had great success and that's a great credit to you. It is equally clear, however, that as several of you have mentioned that we have continuing challenges that we have to confront. I think that all of us recognize that the matters we're discussing this morning are ones that require continued vigilance and effort over time and I know that all the Commission stands behind you in the efforts in that area. I have just a few questions I'd like to ask that bear on the discussion this morning. Several of you have mentioned the inclusion of a performance appraisal sub-element as part of the SES evaluation and the Committee on Age Discrimination had made a recommendation that perhaps that sub-element might be something that could be applied more broadly and I wonder if you had thought about that suggestion and have some reaction to it.

MR. BIRD: We have. Currently there is negotiating going on regarding the performance appraisal system and some elements of that system. At the same time, there are some new initiatives to change performance elements that are being discussed in partnership in some program offices. In the course of all of that, we are looking at a way in those appraisals, and including those that are being revised to incorporate this notion of responsibility and accountability for EEO initiatives in the context of those new appraisals that are being devised now. So, again, I wouldn't want to pre-empt what's going on the

discussions and negotiations but we are looking at that very seriously, and hopefully will address that in the course of this year as those negotiations move forward.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: We had a conversation last year on the value of rotational assignments as a vehicle for people to get exposure to new kinds of positions, enhance their training, as a vehicle for upward mobility and I'm pleased to see from the statistics that you have provided that it looks like that the number of rotational opportunities has grown this year and rather significantly. But it appears that there may be some continuing problems on sort of making in these opportunities in terms of the backfill at the office where the office comes from (I know that the Federal Women's Advisory Committee had raised this as a particular issue with staff) and I wonder if you've, is there more things that we could be doing in that area.

MR. BIRD: You know, I think to some extent this is a byproduct of the downsizing that's occurred over the years which has put some pressure on offices to maintain and support their mission requirements while at the same time trying to encourage development, bring in new employees who need to be trained, and participate in rotational and upward mobility assignments. We don't have the cushion that we used to have to be able to allow people a significant number of opportunities to do this and still turn out the work that's being required. We're trying to balance that now, and as the budget stabilizes and I hope that it will stabilize and perhaps even increase to allow for this kind of activity, I think we'll be able to do a better job of that. This is particularly true with secretarial employees who want to be rotated to have opportunities to broaden their perspectives and we've had some difficulty having a balance of employees to go in while someone's on rotation and fill in and we will be doing some emphasis recruiting in that area and hopefully will have the FTE available to be able to broaden that out a little bit which I think would provide us a mechanism to backfill some of these positions. We used to have a contract in place which went away during the course of downsizing, which allowed us to bring in private sector employees temporarily to backfill and that was big help to us and I think we're going to be looking at trying to reinvigorate that contract and go back to that as an alternative to bringing people in and of course that requires people who come into this agency to have security clearances and backgrounds and this is a product of the contractual arrangement we have to make. It's not quite as easy as it sounds to be able to turn to that as an alternative but I think that's, in my opinion, something certainly worth exploring and it would help facilitate some of the rotational...

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: I know that Irene Little and her presentation had emphasized the importance of not only keeping the number of formal complaints down if you can but in particular trying to make sure you have processes that are available so that issues get addressed and resolved before they get to the stage where they get into the formal process. We need to find ways to make sure their problems are dealt with swiftly and effectively. In that connection, you've described a training course on the EEO complaint process but if I understood what was in the SECY paper, it's a course that is provided to new managers and not to existing managers and I wondered if you might comment on whether this is something that is intended to be available more broadly or perhaps should be mandatory more broadly. What are your suggestions?

IRENE LITTLE: One of the courses that's required of all new supervisors has always included the EEO complaint process. Because the process has changed, there was a need to upgrade and update the training. Yes, it certainly would be useful if all managers were to attend. We have stopped short of requiring that. We are encouraging all supervisors to attend. That is something we probably should look at, whether all managers should be required to attend the course.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: How long a course is it?

IRENE LITTLE: I believe it's three days, where's the training person? Two days, it's a two day course. Thank you, Eileen, It's a two day course.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Okay. I want to make sure we allow time for everyone to ask your questions. Let me turn to Commissioner Dicus.

COMMISSIONER DICUS: Okay. I want to follow up on one of the comments that the Chairman made-has to do with the problem with rotational assignments and being able to as you said, I think, backfill. The same issue surfaced again with the Federal Womens Advisory Committee on training courses and particularly secretaries signing up for training courses and perhaps being able to be accepted into the course, but because they're needed too much in their office, they weren't allowed to attend. You've talked about the possibility perhaps there's some contractual arrangement that we might be able to do with stabilized budget, etc. Would that also perhaps apply in case where it's a pathway to try to resolve this issue that's been raised?

MR. BIRD: Yes. Certainly, I think that would provide a mechanism if we can draw on available staff who can come into the agency quickly when they're needed, this facilitates both training and rotational assignments for that group of employees particularly and again, there's more latitude now than there used to be in utilizing private sector contracts and contractors and employees to come in and fill these needs and I believe that would be a big help in this regard to be able to spell relief when people are interested in pursuing those kinds of training opportunities as well as rotational assignment opportunities.

COMMISSIONER DICUS: Okay. The other thing, Ms. Little, I think you indicated that we're on pretty well a straight line from FY99 with regard to discrimination, complaints, etc. and so forth and I think you made the comment that we are even at the number straight line, I think it was 16, lower than other Federal agencies. Now I'm assuming you're comparing us to comparable sized agencies, or are you dealing with percentages.

MS. LITTLE: Yes, we are comparing it to same number of complaints per 1000 employees or some comparison like that. We're in the lower group.

COMMISSIONER DICUS: Do we know why?

MS. LITTLE: We don't, and I'm not sure we want to put a lot effort on trying to figure it out, we just want to keep it that way. I think it's because we have counselors that are pretty good counselors. They work very closely with our office and we place a lot of emphasis on resolving issues at the informal stage. We're not saying only 16 employees brought issues to us, we're saying only 16 of the several that brought issues felt they needed to go formal. So we think it's the informal resolution process, which we work at very hard.

COMMISSIONER DICUS: Good.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Commissioner Diaz?

COMMISSIONER DIAZ: Thank you. First I'd like to say that I'm very pleased that you raided Puerto Rico (laughter) and sounds like a good idea, I think, you know, similar tactics in Texas, California, New York, and Chicago, Florida might ... also at the same time.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Maybe not Florida. (Laughter)

COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD: Mr. Chairman, I don't think we're looking for statisticians, so that might be okay. (Laughter)

COMMISSIONER DIAZ: Mr. Chairman, hiring of Hispanics from Florida is a very important issue. (Laughter)

MR. BIRD: And retention. (Laughter)

COMMISSIONER DIAZ: I didn't say that. (Laughter). I just want to bring up one follow up question on the issue of upward mobility. I think this is an issue that concerns the entire agency, not only the minorities, but its particularly, you know, painful sometimes to minorities and I did not hear clearly what do we specifically do when there is an opportunity? How do we make sure that the proper, not processes, the emphasis, because there's more on emphasis on a process. Processes sometimes people look at and say, yeah, I'll figure out the form. How do we emphasize the importance of providing an opportunity for our minorities when there is a place?

MS. LITTLE: You mean when there's a vacant position.

COMMISSIONER DIAZ: Yeah.

MS. LITTLE: That's probably an area where we're probably not doing as much as we should be doing. We post the jobs, we, my office sometimes talks to the Chairperson of the EEO Advisory Committees and say to them, are you aware that there's a vacancy out there? You might want to talk to your constituency about that. But there is no formal process for actually encouraging minorities to apply for jobs, if managers are not doing it. We suggest that managers do it. I don't think we have a process in place to actually do that.

COMMISSIONER DIAZ: This is my fifth year here. This issue is long standing. May I recommend that it be made an issue because it is really important for people to know that they will be able to compete, you know, without, and that they'll be aware and they'll be informed and they'll be encouraged, and that brings me to the next issue. In all of these years there are issues that have been raised by different groups and I believe that some of them, you know, I, they kind of disappear in the background, and I would encourage Miss Little and Miss Norry and all of you to once and a while get together with this group and make sure that these issues that were brought out are not lingering in the background but are given the proper attention and it might very well be that people kind of give up, and we don't want that to happen. We want them to be up there and demanding and that brings me to maybe my closing comments is that, you know, I spend a little bit of my life in doing some of these things, and you know the process I think are very well established, the processes, I think people know how to do. However, every year there has to be some excitement, some creativity, some way of rattling the cages and saying this is something that we all need and I think we do a lot of little things, we do a lot of processes, but has to be something that bring people and say this is good. And I really think that every time that something is done that is unique like raiding Puerto Rico results are there, so I would encourage you to look for creative, unusual and new ways of emphasizing the value of diversity to our programs. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you. Commissioner McGaffigan?

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: I'll follow up on something that Commissioner Diaz said. I'd include New Mexico in the list of states that you might want to think about.

COMMISSIONER DIAZ: It's too dry. (Laughter)

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: You might also get some Indian recruits, Native American recruits, in New Mexico, where New Mexico is a majority minority state, which the whole nation will be someday, and I've said this before at these meetings. I'm glad we have, part of my question really is, why didn't we do it earlier? Was it that we did not have new hiring authority the last couple of years, because I know in previous Commission meetings we said to you, gosh, why don't we just knock the door down in Texas, Florida, New Mexico, etc. where there are institutions, New Mexico Tech, New Mexico State, University of Mexico, I think all have 25% or higher minority student bodies and you face, New Mexico's a tough turf because you've got Los Alamos and Sandia there and they're going to fight you for the folks, but, it isn't hard to figure out where the 25% or higher, Puerto Rico is probably 100%, so everybody in the engineering program is perhaps going to be of interest to you, but it isn't hard to find these places. And then, if you're really willing to use, I mean the new thing this year was using on the spot hiring authority and I think that's great. I mean I wish we could do it more broadly, uh, you know we trust managers to go out and if they really size somebody up, I was talking to Janice Dunn Lee about somebody she hopes to hire from Kennedy School, young woman, and she's just about the perfect recruit, and I said "have you made the offer yet"? And she said she hoped it had been made, but she didn't have on the spot authority, she went through some system, and when I read the Federal page, I always hear about how slow Federal recruitment offers are compared to the private sector which does on the spot hiring in the schools. So, why didn't it happen earlier? Why didn't we have the flying Puerto Rico raid earlier?

MR. BIRD: Well, I think again largely that was a byproduct of a downsizing and the continuation from year to year of an anticipated lower threshold of employment. The major change shift in the Puerto Rico trip was a group approach rather than an individual approach. When we've gone to these campuses in the past, largely we've been out there many times without really established positions or the ability to back up the visit with an employment offer. We just didn't have the FTE available to us to do that and we were doing recruiting one person at a time. But what really shifted here was, and many of you saw and some of you met with the group that came to town, we brought a fairly large representative group of highly qualified people back to the agency. Those candidates were then moved around the agency, talked with individual managers, made quite an impression, had some opportunity to get familiar with the agency, and I think there was a tremendous benefit in that when they left and they knew that we were going to be forthcoming with these offers, some of those were actually issued while they were here, that there was a community of interest there that more than one of these students would be coming to a new city, would potentially have a roommate here, would not be alone, and from my perspective I think that was the big change and the big payoff. And we nurtured these employment offers by follow up conversations, there were a lot of individuals, managers included, who did follow up phone calls. There was a commitment at the senior management level here to support this endeavor and so I think, as a result, we got a payoff. What we're trying to do now is focus additional visits, campus visits, on this same kind of an approach where we're not going out solo, going to a career fair, talking to individual people as they flow through, but trying to go there and do a more en masse recruitment effort, if you will, and bring them back to the agency, that's very effective, because then there's the interview interchange with the managers, its convenient for the manager.

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: When you bring them back, do you bring them back to places like Region IV?

MR. BIRD: Yes.

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: Region II.

MR. BIRD: Yes, yes.

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: Because in some cases, those may be more attractive places ...

MR. BIRD: There was a group that went to Chicago and fortunately they were there in ideal weather. I hope those that we hired don't get discouraged.

DR. TRAVERS: They didn't stay that long.

MR. BIRD: They didn't stay that long.

DR. TRAVERS: But I think the key here is the fact that we had the benefit of being able to bring to bear managers, on this trip, people who represent the offices and organizations within which these individuals will work and that's not always the case, we don't always have the luxury of, on our, thirty trips, or whatever we've done, and many of them to minority institutions, the advantage of being able to utilize the management team in this way. Certainly, the payoff here looked to be potentially large so we brought it do bear. We need, to, I think your point though is well taken, we need to look at cases where on the spot hiring authority may be ...

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: When we make a trip presumably we know generally where we're looking for entry level folks, and if somebody just is outstanding, you might want to be able... One thing I want to follow up on you mentioned the EDO had approved recruitment bonuses. There was again something on the Federal Page, or whatever, I read about recently an effort to pay back education for folks. Is that something we already did or is that something that was new and we're planning we're going to take a look at?

MR. BIRD: Well, that actually, there was previous legislation some years ago that permitted some agencies to be able to do that although that, from a regulatory standpoint, there was never an implementation of that legislation. NRC at that point did not have coverage under that initial legislation but got covered under more recent legislation to be able to do that. We're still waiting for implementing guidance and regulation to support that program. There is money in the budget for this year and in the next two subsequent years to support that program and we hope to do that as soon as we get the guidance on how to implement it.

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: At least in terms of recruitment, the government seems to have recognized that it is at a disadvantage and is trying to give you additional tools to use and I'd encourage

you to fully utilize them. The one other tool I guess I'm focused on that we gave up several years ago because of budget difficulty was the fellowship program, graduate fellowship program and obviously, you know, we're not raining with dollars at the moment but our budget situation is at least better this year and we're hoping to continue to sustain an adequate budget next year. Has any thought been given in that context for reviving the graduate fellowship program, because it was a very diverse program, my recollection?

MR. BIRD: Yes, yes it was and I think we had good results with that program, and as you may recall it was a program where we brought people into the agency for some months and then they went off to pursue graduate degree programs. We've talked about that. There's not currently a budgetary authorization for that but we addressed coming back at mid-year and reintroducing that. At the same time, we were given authority in the budget to put together an intern program that was for NRC in general, so this wouldn't be sponsored by a particular office, it would be sponsored generally. And we're shaping that program to some extent by the graduate fellowship program. It's not quite as robust in saying we're going to give you a stipend and send you off to a university to acquire an advanced degree because we're hoping that we'll find people who already have advanced degrees who we can attract here by that program, but some of the elements are still there: continuing education, continuing training, and that sort of thing will be featured in this agency-wide NRC intern program which we're planning to introduce this year. So I think the answer to your question is, is that we would like to reintroduce that concept --

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: I'll look forward to that in your review. I don't want to take all the time, so, but I'm glad you're having those thoughts.

MR. BIRD: And we can dust it off fairly quickly because we know what the elements are.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Commissioner Merrifield?

COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I note that this is the third or fourth of these meetings that I have been able to participate in and it's interesting that this is probably our most widely attended meeting that we having during the year, with standing room only crowds each time, showing the importance that everyone shares in these programs. I think first I want to start off, as the other Commissioners did, in noting the success of the target recruitment effort that we had down in Puerto Rico, although it's always dangerous to point particular people out I think it is worth, there are a few I'd particularly like to say, I'd like to give my credit to, the first one being Vonna Ordaz and the members of HEPAC who took a significant amount of their own personal time in coordinating that effort and ultimately I think will be key in our success. Additionally, the other two I would recognize are Jim McDermott, who is sitting here at the table, as well as Luis Reyes, our Region II Administrator, both of whom took significant amounts of their own personal time, after work and on the weekend to make that happen, and I think our success in that is very dependent on the very good efforts that the two of them as well as the members of HEPAC made. The question coming out of this is given what appears to be a successful program, how, what are the best lessons learned that we have coming out of it that we could apply in targeted efforts towards other targeted groups of people under the EEOC program? How can we leverage this success?

MR. MCDERMOTT: We've mentioned two of three key things already-senior managers. I was there. My role was executive typist. I did the offers. But the presence of senior managers who embody for the potential hires what they could be, what they would do. There's no substitute for dumb luck. Luis' face was on, was the front page on the San Juan paper the day we got to town because of Vasquez. And all the kids were "its him, its him". You know, that kind of impact was wonderful and with John Johnson talking about I'm just back from Ukraine, let me tell you what's going on there, we get involved in international stuff, the kids were gaga. I apologize for calling these young men and women "the kids". I'm one of that over 60 group. The other thing that I want to mention senior managers on the spot offers-advance work. This didn't just happen. We went down and floundered around in Portugal in June, figured out what we needed to do, came back and did it. There was intense contact for the two, I'd say the two months preceding the actual recruitment fair. We had a person dedicated almost totally to it-she's sitting up there-Ilka Solorio-was the project manager on this, contacted kids well ahead of time, reviewed, we rated and ranked and developed selection certificates on these candidates before we left town, that's how we could do the offers. So, recap, senior managers, do the on the spot, do advance work, lots of advance work. We had kids, we already had dates with these kids before we ever got to town, and that's why we had, what, 65 interviews on Saturday and we, it works, but it was advance work. Why didn't we ever do it in the past? Because we just didn't do it. The paradigm was different and we changed it and I think we need to keep the change.

COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD: Well, hopefully, the next time we have one of these meetings, or next year we can celebrate the second in the round of success and hopefully we can continue this with other groups down the road. I think turning a little differently, however, when you look at the, we did have great success with this recruitment program, and I've talked in earlier meetings about a pipeline, and we're doing a better job now of getting new people into the pipeline, but I think the important thing we perhaps haven't focused on as much today is how do we take advantage of the people who are already in the pipeline and obviously it's a continued concern when you look at the variety of information, there are, as Commissioner Diaz points out, there are people who we have that are trained who are capable, who are ready to further their careers here and I underscore I don't think there's probably anymore questions out of this but I do underscore what Commissioner Diaz has said. I think we do need to continue our focus and make sure that those who are already members of the NRC family can take full advantage of enhancing their careers and moving forward. We have talked earlier about individuals who have attempted to increase their own education here at the agency, whether it is individuals who are technical or individuals who are more clerical. How is it, how do we merge that, and here's my question. We have individuals who are attempting to further their own careers and their own knowledge base. How do we link that up with opportunities internally for them to advance careers here at the agency so that we, so we have an understanding of the courses that people are working on and then perhaps through our succession plan try to keep them moving forward in our pipeline?

MR. BIRD: I think one of the answers to that, and Irene can elaborate on it, is the mentoring program, which, if you've got a good mentor working with an individual, developing, helping the individual develop an IDP, that is a plan that's relative to agency jobs and anticipated jobs, then you've got a formula for success there, and you may want to further comment.

MS. LITTLE: I think, while all EEO programs are implemented at the first line supervisor level, for the most part, this is one that really has to be carried at the first line supervisory level. First line supervisor has to work with their direct reports to identify what they're interested in and what's possible and move it from there. We need the commitment to be strong there and we need it to happen. Because I think the agency has the wherewithal to do it, but it has to be done at that level.

MR. BIRD: The development really has to line up with the agency needs and the supervisors really are the ones that know what those needs are going to be. They know where those opportunities are going to occur in their units and I agree with Irene. That, plus if there is an outside mentor, some cooperative effort between all those parties to move, to training and rotational assignments that would enhance their ability to compete effectively for these jobs.

COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD: A final question I have, we have the new alternative dispute resolution process that has resulted in settlements in two of the three occasions that we used it. Did we get any feedback on the new process from those who were involved with it and can you elaborate on some of their reactions?

MS. LITTLE: Yes, we do have an evaluation process where we ask the participants to voluntarily give us their feedback, and the feedback has been very, very positive. Because these are complaints, we're not at liberty to talk about the issues involved, per se, but we have received very positive feedback on the process and that is why we're very optimistic that once people know about the process and understand it, it would be utilized a lot more. Just very quickly, the process involves bringing in a third party neutral from outside the agency to bring the two parties together, the management

official and the complaining employee, and that's just a real good approach to resolving issues objectively in a neutral environment, and amicably.

COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD: Well, I've always been a strong proponent of ADR and as an attorney I think can legitimately safely say to the extent you can keep lawyers and judges out of it, it's probably a good thing.

MS. LITTLE: We think so, too.

COMMISSIONER MERRIFIELD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Good. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MCGAFFIGAN: We're glad the attorney said that.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: I'd like to, let me say in this whole process has been guided and informed by the work of the various advisory committees and I'd like to provide an opportunity for the various representatives of the advisory committees to share any thoughts that they would like with us now and let me call on them order and give them an opportunity if they'd like to speak. First, Brian Thomas is here, he's the co-chair of the African American Advisory Committee.

MR. THOMAS: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you once again on EEO matters. The Advisory Committee for African Americans, we too, would like to recognize the agency's accomplishments in EEO. In particular, we want to recognize the establishment of the sub-element for the SES, members of the SES. I can remember going back to 1989, I believe, where we were advocating putting accountability on the managers that are responsible for implementing the EEO program, and I must say, it's, we view it as a great accomplishment now to see that we have elements and standards in place. We would like to caution the agency, though, that as mentioned by Charlie and others around the table that now that we have those elements and standards we need to be cautious as to the implementation of the elements and standards. Just how is it utilized? What, where do you, what metrics would you establish for determining how well managers of the agency are doing in EEO space when you evaluate their performance. So that's one question. The other area that we would like to recognize as being an area worth some praise is the, what we consider to be very plausible efforts on the part of the Office Directors-NMSS, NRR, Sam Collins and Bill Kane, who personally undertook some efforts to meet with the advisory committees, to reach out to them, to seek their advice in identifying EEO issues that are of concern generic and specific to their offices, and has since then made plans to have follow up meetings with the members of the EEO advisory committees to get input on their direction and on their approaches for resolving issues. So, those two areas we in particular would like to identify with. The Advisory Committee for African Americans have a couple of issues that we've been championing for the past number of years. I was thankful to hear Commissioner Diaz bring to the table the issue of upward mobility. For the longest time, we felt like it's an area that's not well defined, not adequately advertised. We felt that the folks that are in some of the administrative positions and the lower level positions that would take advantage of these opportunities really did not have, do not have enough information about these opportunities so they could do just that, take advantage of it. So, I was really pleased that you brought that to the table. There are two more issues that we keep pushing in the advisory committee and that is the one of not having enough African Americans at the SES, supervisory, management and senior level positions. And specifically, there are currently nine African Americans in a pool of 140 SESers at the agency. There's one in Research, two in ADMIN, one in the ACRS, one in the CFO's office, that's by our count. One in the State Programs, one in OGC, there's one in Region II and I believe there's one at the IG's office and you know, our concern with this issue is that we believe that in the next three to five years you'll see a, you know, an attrition of those numbers, particularly due to retirement, and by our estimation, in the next three to five years if there is not some sort of succession plan to supplement those numbers, we're likely to see one to two SESers, African Americans, in the, you know, one to two African Americans in the SES ranks. Which doesn't speak very well to our diversity, especially in the management of the agency. So, also I'd like to note that the major program offices in the agency, of the three major program offices being Research, NRR, and NMSS, there are no African American SESers in NMSS and NRR. Only one in Research, and that was in part due to, that individual acquiring that status after being up at the Chairman's staff. The other issue that we want to draw attention to has to do with, what we view a trending off of the, well the decline in the hiring of new employees, African Americans, new hires as well as the experienced levels. That has tapered off over the last three or four years. And we think there needs to be more concentrated effort to stop the shrinkage, or the reduction if you will, of the African American population in the NRC workforce and in fact we think that if there is in fact a bigger pool it will help to provide a better basis for identifying qualified African Americans who could then be piped, you know, put into the pipeline and some sort of a succession plan, if you will, to feed into these higher level positions. And that's all I have to say. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you very much, Mr. Cox. Let me now call on Michael Cullingford, who is the co-chair of the Asian Pacific Advisory Committee.

MR. CULLINGFORD: Thank you Mr. Chairman, Commissioners. Good morning. My name is Michael Cullingford and I am Vice-Chair of the Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee. In behalf of APAC, I would like to make two points. Firstly, we appreciate NRC management's continuing increased attention and the focus on the issues of concern to APAC. This attention is apparent across all elements of NRC management. However, one example the Committee would like me to bring forth is to recognize the focus of NRR, it happens to be my office, but this is what the Committee wanted me to say. Mr. Collins, Director of NRR, has met with representatives of each of the Committees, including APAC, to discuss Committee issues. Mr. Collins has also instituted an outreach plan which includes assignment of one NRR executive team member to each, to work with, and our representatives of each Committee to provide advice and guidance on key issues and this has had an impact on encouraging and moving us forward. The second point APAC would like to bring to your attention is the potential retirement of Asian Pacific American representation in SES and supervisory positions in the near future. We believe that succession planning and new hires of Asian Pacific Americans needs attention. Finally, Mr. Chairman, we would like to thank Irene Little and her staff, Barbara Williams, for their continuing support, valuable guidance, and firm oversight of our Committee. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you. Let me call on Vonna Ordaz, who's the chair of the Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee.

MS. ORDAZ: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. And thank you, Commissioner Merrifield, for your kind words. On behalf of HEPAC I would like to extend our appreciation to the various offices that have contributed to our recent and hopefully continued success with recruitment, rotational opportunities, and support of Hispanics. Specifically, we'd like to recognize the Commissioners for your recent support of rotational opportunities for Hispanics, Ms. Norry in the EDO's office for her proactive brainstorming sessions on Hispanic recruitment, which revealed initiatives that were implemented during the Puerto Rico job fair and directly led to its success. We thank you for including HEPAC in the brainstorming sessions. Mr. Collins, Director of NRR, who as the other Committees have indicated, he has met with representatives for each Committee, including HEPAC, to discuss Committee issues, and he has also developed the outreach plan which assigned NRR executive team managers to work with the NRR representatives for each Committee to help champion issues. Mr. Johnson, the Associate Director for Inspection and Programs, who is the NRR manager for HEPA, and he has been deeply involved in HEPA issues and has played a significant role in the Puerto Rico recruitment effort. Mr. Luis Reyes, the Region II Regional Administrator, must also be recognized for his significant contributions in the Puerto Rico effort, and one on one interactions with each and every student. Mr. Kane, Director of NMSS, who has met with all the EEO Advisory Committee Chairpersons to discuss EEO issues, and his initiative to routinely meet with the group to discuss Committee issues. Also, Mr. Kane played a significant role in supporting an upcoming national Hispanic environmental conference that's scheduled for April 2001 by supporting a bronze sponsorship for the agency. This sponsorship will enable the agency to become more attractive at the job fair associated with conference and the NRC will be able to have a presenter at the conference. We'd also like to

recognize Research management who has supported Mr. Jose Ibarra's participation in the Puerto Rico effort and numerous other recruitment trips. Mr. McDermott and his HR staff for their intense coordination efforts associated with the Puerto Rico effort, the on the spot hiring and for establishing the recent recruitment bonuses for new hires which will enable the agency to be more competitive with private industry and other government agencies. I'd like to recognize Ms. Irene Little and her SBCR staff for their continued support, their innovative suggestions, and their strong oversight of our Committee. HEPAC would also like to acknowledge that we are encouraged by the Executive Order that was signed out in October 2000 regarding Hispanic recruitment and the steps that the agency is already taking to increase representation of Hispanics in the workplace. We recommend that management continue this level of enthusiasm and momentum for recruitment efforts. However, in parallel, we need management to place an emphasis on the retention and career advancement of Hispanics that are already on board, and for those that are currently being recruited, in order to establish the appropriate balance. We need management's support in following through with individuals once they come on board to foster the development and advancement. Otherwise, the outcome of the agency's recent successful recruitment efforts could have little or no long term impact on the retention and upward mobility of Hispanics in the NRC. HEPAC is always available and willing to support management in this endeavor. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you very much. Linda Suttora is here. She's representing the Federal Womens Advisory Committee.

MS. SUTTORA: I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. The Federal Womens Advisory Committee would like to reiterate the other advisory committees' recognition of the EEO SES element and the proactive support of encouragement of Sam Collins and Bill Kane. It really has encouraged the FWPAC members to see Office Directors and above interest in EEO issues and that we're not getting brushed aside and just, and it doesn't seem to be just, just talk. It seems to be actually walking the walk. Its very nice to see. The FWPAC this year is going to be concentrating mostly on the upward mobility. I think FWPAC, the women's issues of getting more SES and women managers seems to have been negated this year, the concerns that we had because the SES candidate program had a number of women in it and we've noticed that women managers have become more obvious at least in the past three years that I've been involved in the process. The, its really changed, I believe, in the NRC in the past few years that there have been so many more women managers and senior staff members, obvious to the staff that there's a lot more women in the senior positions. FWPAC would like to concentrate, therefore, at this next few years on upward mobility and retaining staff and educating staff to make them want to stay. There, the concern exists that as folks move up to the upper ranks they may not move fast enough or they may not be getting the education that they believe is necessary. Or, in addition there was all the discussions about helping pay for educational opportunities and we see that technical staff typically don't have a very difficult time getting training, but definitely the secretarial staff has difficulty in getting away from the desk, as we mentioned before, then hoping private temporary positions will be available to our secretaries to get away from their desks to get the training they need and our opportunities for other training, not just secretarial training, but maybe towards the IT fields that we believe that secretaries might be interested in. So we have a four part initiative that is actually beginning tomorrow, there's a kick off meeting for the FWPAC to start the secretarial initiative and we have about 12 members of a subgroup. Some are officially FWPAC members and some are not, and in fact we'd like to include the CIO office member that you mentioned before that seems to have made that transition so we'd like to encourage all women and other employees at the agency who'd like to work with us to see this initiative. The first phase is going to be a data gathering, finding out what opportunities exist in the agency for upward mobility and how to go about that and the second will be to actually help develop IDP type issues that they can put into an IDP and in fact a training plan that would be more, a short term training plan and a long term training plan and see if we can encourage more secretaries to get mentors and I think the, I think the agency is definitely it seems to be set for all this. Thank you very much for letting FWPAC participate.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you. Let me turn now to Boby Abu-Eid, who is the Co-chair of the Joint Labor Management EEO Committee.

MR. ABU-EID: Thank you for this opportunity to say something about the EEO. I represent the Joint Labor Management EEO Committee, which its interest pertains to all the spectrum of NRC's employees and managers as well. We also would like to recognize the agency's progress in certain EEO areas, particularly the agency made substantive efforts in addressing the diversity issue through the agency's wide training to staff and managers. This training helped improving communication and addressing diversity awareness within the agency at large. The agency is also recognized for the formal development of an independent EEO subelement in the appraisal of SES managers. I would like to mention for the record that this issue was started by our committee and we pushed this issue through SBCR forward and I believe Irene recognize that in several meetings and we will be working on other issues also similar to this and we're proud to say this is started from the Joint Labor Management EEOC. So I would like to give recognition for all the members and the majors and the expenditures of the Joint Labor Management EEOC. Also I would like to recognize the dialogue established with the Office Directors and the top managers and administrators regarding EEO issues, it was very very fruitful and helped understanding and better communication and dialogue between the constituents and the advisory committees and the managers. We would like, in addition to mention that we need to continue to work along this line and we, in our paper, we identified several areas that we need to continue working on and focus on and from the experience of the subelement that we mentioned, this is, you may get some ideas about other further progress. I would love to talk about each of those elements that we proposed, however, two major elements that we need to focus on were mentioned by most of the committees and even they were raised by the Commissioners as well. The major one is to expand the pool of women and minorities for supervisory management executive senior level positions. This is a big issue we have been talking about and we need to do more work on this issue. In addition, also, we need to provide more opportunities for career enhancement and upward mobility of women and minorities, persons with disabilities, we should not forget those, and the specific age groups, to reduce current abnormalities we call it in the time in grade for some, as we can see from some demographic data. We need to work more on that. There are other issues that could be of less importance but they are also significant to look at, mostly retention of women and minorities. We talked about the success for hiring-the question is how about retention? What is the rate that we lose at the same time we hire? This is a big issue we need to deal with, too. Also, we talked about the criteria for and the subelement for upgrades of SES managers. We need to talk about the specific criteria of how you do that. That's another issue nor to implement in the best way that we can. We need to continue to improve communication. This issue has been addressed by the SES candidate program and we need to work more on it and I believe the EDO is working on that and he has special individuals working on to improve communication within the agency at large and even outside the agency. Also, the mentoring program we need to do a little bit more work to enhance it. We have vehicles and tools and the question how we can enhance these vehicles and tools to improve EEO issues. Again, the opportunities for rotation I guess is improved but we need to do more work on it because visible assignments and rotations, they help the individual's development and they help the agency at large. We need to take a look also at the effectiveness of the kind of affirmative action employment plan. We have a good plan-the question is how effective it is-how can we implement it? Again, it was mentioned the enhancement of employee welfare family friendly initiative and flexible working environment. This is a good thing we need also to pursue that to improve the conditions within the agency. In summary, the, our committee believes that the implementation of your policies and goals appear that we are implementing the EEO but also to tap the, to tap the full potentials and the resources of all staff and we maximize our performance and productivity, it is not just only the best we need to do it, its just we improve our productivity within the agency at large because all the resources will be utilized. And thank you for listening.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you. Mr. Cox, you had an opportunity to participate at the table on behalf of all of the advisory committees. If you would like to say something specific on behalf of the

Committee on Age Discrimination, I provide you that opportunity.

MR. COX: Well thank you, Mr. Chairman, but one of the advantages of sitting here is I did get to cover my issues. (Laughter)

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you very much. I'd now like to call of Dale Yeilding who is here, of course, representing the National Treasury Employees Union. Dale?

MR. YEILDING: Thank you. Myself on behalf of the National Treasury Employees Union would like to thank the Commission for this opportunity to comment on the agency's EEO progress and highlight areas that the union may assist the agency in improving. As you know, the Joint Labor Management EEOC Committee is the Union's vehicle for input and we support the ten areas that were just mentioned. Several of the committees mentioned that retention of employees is the key to ensure the EEO progress is not eroded by the agency's attrition. In the past year's departures have almost doubled new hires, not this recent past year, but in the past 3-4-5 years. A recruitment in many areas mentioned during this briefing will have no long lasting effect if employees simply use the NRC as a training ground and move on to other agencies or the private sector. The Union is currently involved in negotiations with management to change the collective bargaining agreement and provide employees with many improvements to their work environment. Expanding employee benefits will help retain our qualified workforce. I'm going to give a few examples, short examples, of some benefits that we're currently negotiating that would help retain our qualified workforce. The flexiplace program-currently the Union is discussing with management the expansion of our work at home program to permit more employees to participate. Our current pilot program permits 50 participants, but only 30 are approved due to the significant restrictions placed upon the type of position allowed to enter the program. Office Directors should be encouraged to widen opportunities and make more positions available to the flexiplace program. Childcare subsidies-Congress has recently given Federal agencies the OK to help employees pay for childcare. This program, if implemented by the NRC, would help defray the cost of daycare for the children of middle and low income employees. Retention of these lower paid employees would help improve our EEO figures since many may leave the NRC for employment elsewhere where these benefits are readily available. Flexible work schedules-many improvements are currently on the negotiating table to make the workday more flexible for employees. Managers should also be encouraged to more uniformly implement the existing credit hour program to make this flexible work schedule equally available to all staff. We've also got on the negotiating table the new employee loan repayment program that we're waiting for further guidance from OPM. Some few aspects on upward mobility have been mentioned by our committees. Increased rotational assignment opportunities-rotational assignment opportunities have been trending downward over the past five years as depicted in the statistics in the report. Increasing these development opportunities will promote upward mobility for employee growth. The agency should encourage and reward managers that temporarily redistribute work assignments to release employees for these short rotational periods. Compete for team leader positions-the team leader position is a stepping stone for entry into management. However, many of these opportunities are filled by lateral assignments circumventing a fair competitive selection process. Upward mobility would be enhanced if more employees competed for these supervisory team leader positions. Eliminate the grade 14-15 staffing ceilings-the current focus on entry-level hiring to address the agency's aging workforce may erode employees promotion potential if higher graded positions are eliminated upon staff retirements. This may encourage our middle-aged workforce to look elsewhere for advanced career opportunities. The agency should permit Office Directors and their local partnerships more flexibility to retain vacated higher-graded positions to promote upward mobility. Comment on grievances-many employees utilize the grievance process to resolve a problem that may have EEO implications. Evaluating only the statistics of EEO counselors activities may not accurately reflect the quantity of EEO problems in this area. The large grievance backlog could be reduced if managers would provide a more timely response to grievance. I suggest EEO training also be permitted for Union Stewards. The EEOC is offering a series of training courses to improve the process and address the increasing number of complaints. Of course, alternative dispute resolution would be included in this training and would benefit employees by being helped both by stewards and the EEO counselors. This Commission briefing looks in detail at the EEO's statistics of those employees selected for new positions. An analysis of the diversification of those employees applying and making the best qualified list may also present more EEO information. Improvements cannot be achieved if candidates from all EEO areas are not applying for the NRC positions. Awards and appraisals-the Union's review of awards at the office level has recently shown an improved correlation to performance appraisals. The quantity of grievances associated with performance appraisals has declined. This reflects that supervisors have stopped arbitrarily raising the standards for the ratings of outstanding and excellent. The statistics show right now that over 90% of the staff still receive outstanding and excellent ratings. Employees need an objective, attainable performance goal and need to be judged fairly and consistently on their achievement towards obtaining these goals. I'd like to close by saying the National Treasury Employees Union looks forward to working with the agency to establish a better work environment and improved diversification in our workforce. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN MESERVE: Thank you. I want to thank all of you for your comments this morning. I know that I speak for all the Commission when I say that equal employment opportunity is essential to the success of this agency. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to participate in the accomplishments of the agency, be able to advance their career goals, and to work in an environment that is absolutely free of discrimination and recognizes and values diversity. With that I'd like to thank you for your candid views of our efforts in this area. Let me turn to my colleagues and see if any of them would like to make a closing statement? If not, I'd like to thank you, and we're adjourned.CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached description of a meeting of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission entitled:

TITLE OF MEETING: BRIEFING ON EEO PROGRAM
(PUBLIC MEETING)
PLACE OF MEETING: Rockville, Maryland
DATE OF MEETING: January 9, 2001

was held as herein appears, is a true and accurate record of the meeting, and that this is the original transcript thereof taken stenographically by me, thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under the direction of the court reporting company.

Transcriber: DARLENE K. WRIGHT
Reporter: (TAPE RECORDING)