



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. 00-049

March 20, 2000

NRC AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SUBMIT PROPOSAL TO CONGRESS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RELIEF FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Department of Labor have jointly submitted proposed language to Congress to amend the Energy Reorganization Act to further protect nuclear industry employees from retaliation by their employers for raising safety issues with their employers or the NRC by providing them with earlier relief.

The proposed language would strengthen a section of the Energy Reorganization Act of 1974 that provides a process under which employees (or former employees) in the nuclear industry who believe they have been discriminated against for raising safety concerns may seek a reinstatement to their former position, or another remedy. The Department of Labor has responsibility for administering this section of the Act.

In a letter proposing the legislative changes, Alexis M. Herman, Secretary of Labor, and Richard A. Meserve, Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said that shortcomings in the current law that weaken the protections given to nuclear industry employees who report safety concerns would be strengthened.

The proposed language they said would “revise section 211 by setting more realistic time limits for steps in the adjudicatory process and specifying explicit time frames for steps for which no time limits are currently provided. It would also provide a clearer description of the procedural steps that are involved, giving parties better notice of how the process works. The bill would afford more timely relief to complainants by providing for a preliminary order of reinstatement of the complainant, if the Secretary of Labor determines at the conclusion of the investigation conducted at the outset of the process that a violation has occurred.”

###