

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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ALL EMPLOYEES MEETING (PUBLIC)

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TUESDAY,

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

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The Commission met in the Two White Flint North Auditorium,
at 10:00 a.m. EDT, Christopher T. Hanson, Chair, presiding.

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

CHRISTOPHER T. HANSON, Chair

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner

ANNIE CAPUTO, Commissioner

BRADLEY R. CROWELL, Commissioner

NRC STAFF:

DAN DORMAN, Executive Director, Office of the Executive Director for
Operations (OEDO)

SCOTT MORRIS, Deputy Executive Director for Reactor
and Preparedness Programs, OEDO

HIRUY HADGU, Reactor Systems Engineer, Office of
Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR)

ALSO PRESENT:

LARRY CRISCIONE, Reliability and Risk Analyst, Office

of Nuclear Security and Incident Response

BOYCE TRAVIS, Senior Nuclear Engineer, NRR

KEITH TETTER, Reliability and Risk Analyst, NRR

TANYA HOOD, Project Manager, Office of Nuclear

Materials Safety and Safeguards

SHERYL SANCHEZ, National Treasury Employees Union

Chapter 208

PROCEEDINGS

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10:00 a.m.

MR. DORMAN: Good morning, everyone. Welcome, and thank you for joining us today at this important meeting, where we'll hear from Chair Hanson and Commissioners Wright, Caputo, and Crowell. Welcome to the Chair and Commissioners.

Also I want to welcome Sheryl Sanchez, the President of Chapter 208 of the National Treasury Employees Union.

I'm Dan Dorman, the Executive Director for Operations, and I'm pleased that we're all able to be together again, both in person, and it's great to see a very full room here, as well as all the people who are joining us virtually for this meeting.

As a reminder, this is a public meeting, so I want to also extend a warm welcome not only to our employees, but also to everyone in attendance, including any interagency partners, industry, members of the public or news media that are joining us today.

It's hard to believe that the summer is all but over, but we are fully engaged facing many challenges and opportunities.

And before I turn the meeting over to Chair Hanson, let me just affirm that the NRC remains committed to our safety and security mission, making technically and legally sound decisions in a timely and efficient manner, always open to better ways to accomplish our mission, building the health of the organization as we work to optimize performance in a hybrid environment with many new staff, and engaging our external stakeholders to build their confidence in what we do.

1 For today's meeting, the Chair and each commissioner will
2 deliver opening remarks, and following their remarks the remainder of the
3 meeting will be reserved for questions and answers, as we really do want to
4 hear from you. We will do our best to answer as many questions as possible in
5 the next two hours.

6 We did receive several questions in advance through the
7 Power App and the commissioners will be responding to as many questions as
8 they can. After their opening remarks, we will begin with the most-liked
9 questions from the app.

10 I want to thank also Hiruy Hadgu from NRR, is one of our
11 agency Toastmasters who will be reading the questions that are provided
12 before and online. And we will also take questions here in the auditorium at the
13 microphones that are set up in the two aisles.

14 I want to avoid distractions, so I'd ask that you power off your
15 -- or silence your cellphone, smart watches, any other devices. And in addition
16 to my thanks to all who are attending, I want to acknowledge everyone who
17 worked hard to make this meeting possible.

18 So thank you to our volunteers, to the staff in the Office of
19 Administration, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Office of the
20 Executive Director for Operations, and the Office of the Secretary for helping
21 with the technology and logistics to help ensure that this meeting runs
22 smoothly.

23 And finally, I welcomed Sheryl Sanchez at the outset. I want
24 to also thank Sheryl for her participation in this meeting. And NTEU will have
25 an opportunity to speak near the conclusion of the meeting.

1 So with that, it's my pleasure and privilege to turn the
2 Commission -- the meeting over to Chair Hanson.

3 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Dan. I suspect that there's an
4 emphasis there on the pleasure. (Laughter.)

5 Well, thanks, everyone. It's good to be back in a big space
6 like this. I think the first one of these I did a few years ago was almost entirely
7 virtual, and then we got a little bigger last year by doing it in the Commission
8 Hearing Room because this space was still under renovation. And now we're
9 almost -- this is almost pre-pandemic time, so it's great to see so many faces in
10 person.

11 And I want to welcome the folks who are tuning in virtually
12 from the Regions, our resident inspectors out at the sites, the folks at the
13 Technical Training Center in Chattanooga, anybody who's maybe in any of the
14 overflow rooms around or had just decided not to come downstairs for the
15 meeting. And I'm also of course glad to be here with my colleagues on the
16 Commission.

17 I hope everyone, I want to echo Dan's sentiments, I hope
18 everybody had a good summer. It went by way too fast, and I hope everybody
19 was able to take a little time off, spend time with loved ones and recharge.
20 We're back into the busy season now. And I think this meeting is a good way to
21 get started with that.

22 I also want to thank SECY of course for setting all of this up,
23 and Hiruy for being our question-asker over there.

24 As Dan said, I know that there were questions submitted in
25 advance. And I can see, I think all of us saw that, you know, telework and

1 Commission voting and the resident inspector program were all kind of the top
2 vote-getters. I know we'll get to those, so I'll kind of, I think I'm going to save
3 my comments on that stuff until that later.

4 This is a very exciting and dynamic time for our agency.
5 There is significant renewed interest in nuclear power, particularly for new and
6 advanced and reactors. And along with that excitement I think comes also
7 significant pressure from industry and stakeholders of all stripes. And some of
8 that pressure is, let's face it, is directly focused on us, is laser-focused on us, I
9 would even say.

10 And these groups, many of them have been growing louder in
11 saying that the NRC needs to be more efficient and that the NRC can't be an
12 impediment to deployment. And anybody who's here heard me talk over the
13 last few years, you know, knows that I agree that the NRC can't be an
14 impediment, but we have to hold our safety mission front and center.

15 We're also seeing significant interest from Congress, and
16 whether that's legislative changes that have been enacted or legislative
17 changes that are under consideration, etc. For instance, NEIPA is something
18 that just went into effect. And we're also seeing some uncertainty around things
19 like, you know, inevitably a court decision will pop up. This one most recently in
20 the Fifth Circuit around the ISP license.

21 And I think in addition to some of that uncertainty then also is
22 the ongoing work, ongoing discussion around telework. And I think that I want
23 to recognize I guess up front that I think some of that uncertainty then can
24 impact trust and morale.

25 And also for resident inspectors, I know that there are some

1 specific challenges associated with their positions. And maybe that you're
2 concerned that some of those challenges are being sidelined by the agency. I
3 can certainly tell you that, I, and I know a number of my colleagues, have a lot
4 of interest in the resident program. We'll talk some about that I know later this
5 morning as well.

6 I've listened and had the opportunity to speak with many of
7 you directly in my morning coffee chats. I've got enough to do, you know,
8 probably a couple of these things a month with the various organizations
9 around the agency. And I really value these discussions.

10 It's an opportunity for honest feedback. It's just me in the
11 room with a handful of staff, whether it's from one of the affinity groups or, you
12 know, NRR or Admin or whatever. I try and touch every organizational office at
13 least once during the course of the year, hopefully some of you more than that.

14 As well as get direct feedback in all-hands meetings that I do
15 out in the regions. And I really appreciate the directness of the interactions.
16 And I would just invite you if you have the opportunity when the email comes
17 around in your office to take advantage of that. And I look forward to meeting
18 with you.

19 Given all of this, given the dynamic environment that we're
20 really in, and whether that's kind of external events or internal things, the
21 mission is more important than ever, right, protecting people and the
22 environment. And everyone in this agency is absolutely critical to that mission.

23 And your engagement and your participation and your
24 feedback and your ownership of that mission is more critical than ever. I think
25 we had one of the highest FEVS participation rates this year in the government.

1 I want to congratulate the staff for that. Some people had said be careful what
2 you wish for, we'll see what the results come back as. But even so, I'd be a lot
3 more worried if we had a really low FEVS participation rate.

4 So even if there are a lot of things that we can improve on,
5 and I know there are, because we are from top to bottom a continuous
6 improvement organization, I think that actually a high, just a high participation
7 rate is overall a really good thing.

8 I think another couple of critical pieces of success is a culture
9 of what I call high trust and high confidence. And you know, trust between the
10 staff and senior leaders in the agency, that senior leaders are -- can, will
11 responsibly navigate us through this period of uncertainty.

12 And leaders need to have trust in the staff, that they're going
13 to participate -- that they're going to continue to prioritize the mission and get
14 the job done.

15 And I think we also need to have high confidence in our
16 technical abilities, you know. Think about the expertise in this agency, the
17 number of PhDs, the amount of -- and breadth and depth of technical expertise
18 and scientific expertise in this agency.

19 And the amount of intellectual capital that we have to
20 leverage in meeting the challenges ahead. It's really, really astounding, and
21 people should have confidence in those abilities.

22 And you know, as we near our 50th anniversary next year,
23 you know, we need to land in the right spot on risk-informing our work. And this
24 means using the lessons learned we've built up over the decades to make
25 better, smarter, and more durable regulatory decisions.

1 So our first job and foremost is to uphold the mission and
2 we're doing that, and we're continuing to do it admirably. At the RIC I listed
3 several accomplishments achieved by the staff.

4 And we've made progress even in the last six months, right. I
5 mean, Vogtle 3 is up and operating. The feedback that I've gotten consistently
6 from Southern is how constructive and proactive and agile the staff has been in
7 the licensing and oversight work on both Vogtle 3 and 4. And I think it should
8 be another continued point of pride there.

9 We've issued the SER and the EIS for the Kairos Hermes
10 Test Reactor and we're waiting on the mandatory hearing on that, scheduled I
11 think now for October 19. I'm looking forward to that.

12 The Part 53 rule is with the Commission for consideration.
13 We issued the initial authorization for the Centrus facility in Ohio to produce
14 HALEU. We issued the supplemental EIS for Turkey Point.

15 And on the administrative side we've hired 234 people
16 externally. And you know, we had a really ambitious stretch goal of getting 400
17 out there.

18 But for a set of muscles that we haven't exercised in maybe
19 some period of time, 234 people here as we approach the end of the fiscal year
20 is really quite an accomplishment for hiring managers and OCHCO and all the
21 folks setting up onboarding and mentoring, etc.

22 So with that, I want to wrap it up, but I want to say thank you
23 sincerely for the work that all of you do to support the agency and the
24 professional manner in which you do it, no matter where you're working from,
25 and I'm looking forward to continuing to serve alongside you to protect people

1 and the environment. Thank you.

2 And I'll hand it over to Commissioner Wright.

3 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Good morning, and thank you,
4 Dan, for opening the meeting, and thank you, Chair Hanson, for your opening
5 remarks. And I echo your welcome to everyone and thanks to everyone who
6 had a part of putting this meeting together as well. And thank you for your
7 attendance.

8 You know, throughout the year there are plenty of
9 opportunities for you to hear from us, the members of the Commission. But this
10 is a special opportunity for you and for us to hear directly from you. So I look
11 forward to the later part of the meeting for the questions.

12 You know, during my RIC speech back in March, I talked
13 about what we need to do as an agency to meet the moment in 2023. Although
14 the year's not quite over yet, we have accomplished some notable items. So
15 thank you for the work that you've done. I can't cover everything but let me take
16 a moment to touch on a few things.

17 We'll start on the materials side of the house, John. You
18 know, I feel like we often talk about reactors first. But the truth is that both
19 materials and reactors are equally important, so I'm just going to change it up a
20 little this year and let's go with the materials side first today.

21 You know, in this area there's been some major licensing
22 accomplishments. NMSS has issued license to a Holtec Consolidated Interim
23 Storage Facility and staff all around the agency continue to work on legal issues
24 surrounding that facility. So thanks to everyone who's worked on this project.

25 It wasn't easy and hasn't been easy so far. But you have

1 handled the whole process with professionalism, and while at the same time
2 keeping our safety mission front and center.

3 NMSS has also finished decommissioning activities and the
4 non-ISFSI site release for La Crosse, and which is a nice accomplishment. And
5 you've also, NMSS has had your finger on the pulse of the advanced reactor
6 fuels.

7 And I see the work that you're doing to help the agency
8 prepare for advanced reactors, including the work being done to ready the
9 agency for these advanced fuels. So thank you again for work on approving
10 several transportation packages. These applications related to the advanced
11 and HALEU fuels, so.

12 You know, without this work on the front end of the fuel cycle,
13 there'd be no way to power these new reactors. So thank you for this, which is
14 at times under-appreciated work.

15 Finally, as many of you know, I'm a huge fan of the
16 agreement state program. And I want to send my thanks to staff all across the
17 agency for your support in this program. I noticed how you took feedback from
18 the states and held the National State Liaison Office Conference this summer,
19 which I came to and spoke.

20 And I appreciate the work that you're doing each and every
21 day to ensure that the National Materials Program is meeting our mission.

22 And with that, let's talk a minute about Vogtle 3 and 4 and
23 some of the reactor stuff, Andrea. Back in March Unit 3 had just received its
24 first criticality, and since then a lot has happened. The NRC has overseen the
25 completion of pre-operational and startup testing, and believe me, I know this

1 wasn't easy.

2 And then the safe transition to commercial operations. I know
3 that many of you in this room and online contributed to that important milestone.

4 Also while -- we also recently made the 103(g) finding for
5 Vogtle 4, which authorized fuel load. To all the staff that were involved in this
6 and with either one of these things, of either 3 or 4, I thank you for meeting the
7 moment. It's a big, big accomplishment.

8 And so while we're on the subject of new reactors, I'd also like
9 to extend my thanks to all the staff who worked on the final rule for emergency
10 preparedness for small modular reactors and other new technologies. That
11 was an important accomplishment for us as a modern regulator, and it shows
12 that we can effectively develop a framework that is risk-informed, performance-
13 based, and technology-inclusive.

14 I know how much work goes into rulemaking, from developing
15 the technical basis to working through internal debates, to addressing
16 sometimes hundreds of written comments from stakeholders. It's not easy and
17 it's not easy work. So but again, thank you for meeting the moment in those
18 areas.

19 You know, the review of the Kairos Hermes test reactor is
20 another accomplishment that we should be very proud of. The application was
21 submitted in September of '21. And here we are less than two years later, and
22 the safety and environmental reviews have been completed. You should be
23 commended for that, and it's being talked about all around the country.

24 I want to applaud you for your innovative approach to
25 conducting this review and for taking on some challenges in terms of licensing

1 TRISO fuel and for crediting the functional containment approach outlined in
2 SECY-18-0096.

3 This shows that we can think outside of the box and to adapt
4 a risk-informed approach when thinking about a new design. So job well done
5 there.

6 Also want to take a minute to acknowledge the resident
7 inspectors. Paving the way for new reactors is important, but the current fleet, if
8 it isn't kept safe, nobody will be building new reactors. You are -- all of you play
9 such an important role in ensuring that the operating fleet is safe.

10 And I've been lucky enough to have a front-row seat to what
11 you do. Some of you already know this, but I've sort of been training as a
12 resident inspector myself. I call it my resident for a day program. And I've been
13 doing this for about a year now.

14 I pick a site and I shadow the resident around for one of their
15 workdays, start to finish. I arrive bright and early, usually very dark and very
16 early. I bring my own lunch and beverages and I walk around with the residents
17 all day so I can really understand what they do.

18 We spend time in the control room, we walk down systems,
19 we attend NRC and licensee meetings on the corrective action program so I
20 really get to see how they interact and how that works. And as well as other
21 scheduled or unscheduled items or events that are going on. And we talk with
22 the licensee as well.

23 That's my way of appreciating and understanding exactly
24 what you do. And I thank you for the opportunity to engage with you and follow
25 you around. It's very helpful for me.

1 I've been in plants in three regions now. I hope to hit the
2 fourth one very soon. So it's helpful to me. I would encourage my colleagues if
3 they have a chance to take the opportunity to do it as well.

4 So before we get to questions, I do want to acknowledge the
5 hard work that goes on in the corporate support area. For instance, all that
6 OCHCO is doing to ensure that we have the right people to meet the moment
7 going forward. I understand that we've hired about 235 of the 400 people that
8 we were planning on bringing on board this year, which is great news.

9 So let me just end by saying I appreciate all that you do. And
10 if you ever want to talk, my staff and I are just a phone call away. Thank you.

11 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Commissioner Caputo.

12 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Good morning. It's wonderful to
13 see you all here. I will also add my thanks to all the staff that worked hard to
14 prepare today and make today possible.

15 And for all of you for being here, for those who took the time
16 in advance of the meeting to enter their questions, submit their questions
17 electronically. I appreciate that because this conversation is one of the most
18 important activities I think the Commission can engage in all year. So I look
19 forward to your questions this morning.

20 I appreciate Commissioner Wright's summary of all of the
21 accomplishments in the last year. It's been an impressive year, and I think that
22 reflects a lot of hard work on the part of most of you in creating that amazing list
23 of accomplishments and showing the dedication to our safety and security
24 mission and its execution. So I thank you for all of that.

25 I also want to associate myself with the chairman's remarks.

1 Leadership and trust in leadership are incredibly important. But I think there are
2 many, many things in his remarks that certainly I agree with and heartily
3 support, so I thank him for those remarks.

4 So but I will embellish on a little bit what I see as major
5 challenges in front of the agency at this point. Obviously you know the
6 Chairman touched on this some, there's tremendous change just happening in
7 the electricity industry.

8 The industry is seeing major sources of electricity generation
9 go away at a time when demand for electricity is poised to grow, either through
10 increased use of electric cars, potentially, you know, economic growth, which
11 has a tendency to stimulate electricity demand, etc., just as part of the overall
12 energy transition that the federal government and many countries are pursuing
13 in response to climate change.

14 So at home and abroad, as the Chairman mentioned,
15 expectations for new nuclear development are reaching a level that we really
16 haven't seen since the 1970s. This agency saw a resurgence starting in 2007
17 and I think a fair amount of licensing work was done. But obviously what we
18 have seen out of that so far is one and likely a second reactor.

19 So the nature of what may be coming is potentially much
20 more significant than that as companies look toward meeting future demand for
21 electricity. So this is all part of just a growing consensus that nuclear energy
22 has to make a significant contribution to national and global energy security and
23 clean energy needs.

24 So part of this means our environment is changing. As the
25 Chairman mentioned, Congress, the administration, nuclear sector

1 stakeholders, licensees, applicants, the public, the international community, all
2 eyes are on the NRC, and all are asking how we are going to handle advanced
3 nuclear reactors and questioning whether we can do it in an efficient and timely
4 manner.

5 This is a novel activity for us. These are new technologies we
6 will be asked to respond with regulatory innovation, handle these technologies,
7 review these technologies in new ways as the technologies themselves are
8 developing. This is going to be a challenge that requires a lot of collaboration,
9 a lot of creative problem-solving, and is going to force us to think and work in
10 new ways.

11 We will also likely see our licensing workload rebound, given
12 the interest in subsequent license renewal. I think you're probably all aware
13 that we are now well into receipt for several applications for subsequent license
14 renewal.

15 So the last round of license renewals had largely tapered off,
16 with a few exceptions, but now we're seeing the next round start, and that work
17 is likely to grow. In addition to requests for power uprates, construction of fuel
18 facilities or expansion of fuel facilities, ongoing interest in medical isotope
19 facilities and others.

20 And part of this, as the Chairman mentioned, you know,
21 there's been significant progress in hiring new employees. And this is a
22 response to I think a need for managing what has been a shift in our
23 demographics.

24 Only a few years ago, 50% of our employees were eligible to
25 retire. And while that was a wealth of expertise that this agency benefitted for

1 many years with employees working far longer than they were eligible to retire,
2 which was quite a blessing, the reality is those folks are and have been heading
3 off into a well-earned retirement.

4 And so this hiring wave is incredibly important to give us sort
5 of more balanced demographics. But it also comes with a significant challenge
6 in welcoming these employees, onboarding them, working with them, making
7 them part of the team, instilling our culture and our values, and building that
8 dedication to the safety and security mission, you know, as role models to new
9 people in this agency, people who will one day, based on their experiences
10 here, hopefully be future leaders.

11 And that's an incredibly important activity, not simply to just
12 keep pace with hiring needs, but to effectively transfer knowledge and
13 acclimate these folks for the future.

14 So for the agency as the gatekeeper for the safe development
15 of new nuclear technologies, our reputation will rest on how effectively we rise
16 to meet the moment, as Commissioner Wright says. These challenges are
17 bigger than any one of us. But I think that's really why most of us are here in
18 public service, to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

19 So I applaud you for your diligence, your dedication. I
20 appreciate the work you do each day to make the agency successful. You're
21 brilliant, and as a team capable of achieving great things, many of which
22 Commissioner Wright has already enumerated.

23 So I look forward -- I'm thrilled for the actions and successes
24 we've seen in the last year. I'm excited about what's to come in the next year.
25 And with that, I will turn it over to Commissioner Crowell.

1 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you. Thank you to all
2 of you for being here today. I appreciate there's some blessing and curse to
3 going last. But the blessing is that I agree with the remarks of all of my
4 colleagues that have gone before me. They've all hit important highlights that I
5 agree with.

6 You know, a few weeks ago marked my one-year anniversary
7 at the Commission, on the Commission. And my how things have changed.
8 We're in a different room than last time. There's many more people and faces,
9 which I think is great.

10 Even greater is the fact that I recognize many of the faces,
11 which is also a commentary on that we don't have to wear masks anymore,
12 which was a hard thing even when I saw faces when I first started. I can now
13 identify people as well.

14 And so we're emerging into a more regular world than we've
15 been in for the last few years and I think that's important. And obviously is
16 going to be part of -- a large part of what we talk about today. But you know,
17 there's other notable things that have changed since my first all-hands, all-
18 employees meeting just about a year ago now.

19 You know, we're one less commissioner, which I didn't
20 necessarily expect just one year into my term, that we wouldn't be at our full
21 complement. I hope we can get back there soon. I think we work best at five.

22 And just seeing the folks in this room, and I know there's
23 many more online and in adjoining rooms. You know, it reminds me of the
24 breadth and scope of the agency and how large of an agency we are and the
25 value of all this, knowing each other and being able to work together. That's

1 certainly a benefit to me.

2 The past year has gone by kind of in one sense in the blink of
3 an eye, and another sense it's felt like, you know, five years already. But I've
4 learned quite a bit. The firehose is still fully intact, but I think that's just, that's
5 how it is here. We have a lot of work to do, we have a lot of challenging topics.
6 We have a lot of eyes focused on us.

7 And so that firehose mentality of we're always drinking from
8 the high velocity hose is going to be just how life is for all of us. But I think
9 we're all up for the challenge. I'm up for the challenge, I'm looking forward to it.

10 Spending time at headquarters has been great for me to get
11 to know, you know, to get comfortable with my staff, get to know many of you.
12 But I've also had a chance to get out in the field as well and see all sides of
13 what we do at the agency, from the operating reactor side to decommissioning,
14 to all parts of the fuel cycle.

15 I've made it to at least one site in every region thus far, with
16 the exception of Region III, and I apologize. I will keep you the highest on my
17 list going forward. Although I think, Commissioner Wright, you said you're short
18 a power reactor in Region III as well, so I don't feel so bad. (Laughter.) Maybe
19 we have a joint travel coming up here soon.

20 But it's incredibly valuable for me to have visited the sites that
21 we regulate because, one, I get where we have staff onsite, I get to meet them
22 and know what they do on a daily basis. But also it allows me to piece together
23 all of what I hear and learn from all of you on a daily basis and see how it goes
24 into application on a practical basis.

25 And really it's been an enormous opportunity to connect the

1 dots and learn the value of what we do and how it all fits together. And that's
2 why it's important that, you know, we continue to get out there in the field.

3 It's why I think the NRC has always valued, you know, cross-
4 divisional opportunities to get exposure to different parts of the agency and that
5 value that has. There's somewhat of a downside of the musical chairs. But as
6 long as you come back to your chair and you're better and smarter for it, I think
7 we're stronger as an agency for it as well.

8 I also had the pleasure of attending the Organization of
9 Agreement States in Seattle in last month. And Chairman Wright was there,
10 Commissioner Wright was there as well. And that was very valuable to really
11 get a sense of how dedicated our agreement state partners are to what they do
12 and the value that they can add to our mission.

13 And that they struggle as well with resources, capacity of all
14 shapes and sizes. And their will to want to do the best job they can in a
15 resource-constrained environment and our important role we have in helping
16 them. But also just the important role that we have in our mutual success. So I
17 want to find ways to strengthen that going forward.

18 Our resident inspectors, every time I meet with our resident
19 inspectors it's been hugely valuable to hear their perspectives on the
20 challenges. I think there's no better personification of presence with purpose
21 than our resident inspectors. Because even on a slow, boring day, so to speak,
22 their presence at a site is important.

23 It's a signal to the operator that they always need to be
24 vigilant and maintain the highest standards. And that we're there to help and
25 oversee in a constructive relationship. So maintaining the integrity and the

1 strength of the resident inspector program is going to be a priority to me going
2 forward as well.

3 All this to say is that the value, the agency's most valued
4 assets, are our people. I think that's how it's been at the NRC since its
5 inception. We have an ability to attract the best and brightest and we need to
6 continue to be that magnet for the best and brightest because of the type of
7 work that we do and the importance of it.

8 And that importance is just increasing all the time from a
9 technical perspective to the highest public policy perspectives. I mean, all eyes
10 are on the NRC as part of whether we're going to have a true, durable, and
11 lasting nuclear renaissance, really since the inception of nuclear power for the
12 first time going forward.

13 And that's based on energy security concerns, climate change
14 concerns, etc. Like we are in the position to be the change-makers, to be the
15 people that help enable a truly better future for the next generation. And I want
16 us to be -- embrace that and find a way that we can all work together in
17 whatever manner that is to achieve that.

18 That heightened interest is going to be on us going forward in
19 a good way and in a not-so-good way. You know, we're going to get it from all
20 sides, and we're not going to be able to make everyone happy. But if we stay
21 true to what our mission is and really keep in mind that we're part of solving big
22 issues and why we're doing what we're doing, we'll meet the moment.

23 But you know, it's really now or never to meet that moment.
24 And it's important that we get it right. So I'm here to help facilitate that. I'm
25 looking forward to hearing from everyone today. There's nothing I value more

1 than feedback from employees about how we can enable them -- you to do your
2 job better, be it your specific role, your division, the agency as a whole.

3 And so it's great to see everyone in person today and I will
4 always come to any meeting with donuts. And that is my weakness in life. So
5 whoever did that, if that's the union, the coffee and donuts, bless you.
6 (Laughter.)

7 I know we're going to have a challenging conversation but a
8 constructive one today, and I look forward to it. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

9 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner
10 Caputo and Commissioner Crowell, for your remarks.

11 Now we'll move into the Q&A portion of the meeting. We're
12 going to stop -- I guess we'll start with the top-liked questions submitted in
13 advance, and then we'll go to questions here from the room and maybe
14 alternate. I don't know, Hiruy, we're at your mercy.

15 So with that, why don't you read the first question.

16 MR. HADGU: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 So a large number of questions were submitted regarding the
18 recent SECY-23-0072 on the Flexible Work Model. Several of the themes from
19 these questions have been consolidated for convenience and to save time.

20 The first part of this question is - there have been significant --
21 there has been significant effort put into developing the Flexible Work Model,
22 which is expected to improve work-life flexibilities and make the NRC a more
23 attractive place to work.

24 In particular, this policy would de-emphasize an arbitrary in-
25 person schedule for sitting in an office connecting to virtual meetings and

1 focused on ensuring that employees come in the office to support meaningful
2 in-person interactions.

3 Could each commissioner briefly discuss their perspective on
4 telework in general? Many years ago at least one commissioner was
5 teleworking various days each week before telework was fully implemented. Of
6 all positions, it would seem commissioners should be at the office to interact
7 routinely and be available for impromptu meetings and be available to staff, etc.

8 If commissioners are teleworking, there must be benefits.
9 Specifically, what are your views on the plan and what do you view as priorities
10 in striking the right balance between workplace flexibility and achieving agency
11 goals that are better supported by in-person activities?

12 CHAIR HANSON: Okay, I wasn't sure how we were exactly
13 going to do that. Thank you for that question. And it's good to just dive right
14 into these things.

15 I'll just, the question asked for each of our views, so I'll just
16 start with mine and certainly want to say up front -- iterate the respect that I
17 have for my colleagues. And I know their views are honestly held as well. And
18 so I look forward to the discussion today.

19 As I've said on several occasions, and I think this was
20 expressed in my vote on the -- on a COM earlier this year, I think that the
21 telework decisions and the Flexible Work Model decisions fall squarely under
22 the EEO's delegated authority. Dan's responsible for the daily operations, and
23 that includes work schedules. And that's still my personal view.

24 My view is that the Commission's role is -- primary role is to
25 set policy for the agency. As Chairman Klein and Meserve once told me, the

1 Commission's job is to tell the staff what to do, and it's the staff's job to figure
2 out how to do it.

3 So I work, in my office we're primarily in the office. I'm in the
4 office anywhere from four to five days a week, and my staff are in some
5 combination of that. But it's not, I guess I don't see this particularly as my -- it's
6 not about my preferences or how my specific office works.

7 For me it's much more about the senior staff in the agency,
8 Dan and Scott and Kathy and the office directors and others figuring out how to
9 develop and implement an approach that is sufficiently flexible that also
10 prioritizes the mission.

11 I would say that the telework policy is going to be really
12 important for recruitment and retention. And I agree with Commissioner Caputo
13 that knowledge management as we move forward is going to be -- is and
14 should become even more important. And we need to consider knowledge
15 management as well when we think about this.

16 This is -- the Flexible Work Model, I think as has been
17 acknowledged maybe in the premise of the question, has been under
18 development for some time. It was about 18 months ago, I think, that we
19 chartered, that the HEART team was chartered. And TPIWG followed that.
20 And we had a number of listening sessions and so forth.

21 So for me, and this is really based on I think what I've heard
22 from the staff in a variety of settings, an awful lot about this is certainly yeah,
23 prioritizing the mission, but it's also about trust.

24 It's about trusting the career leadership, as I said, to find the
25 right balance and prioritize accomplishment of the mission. And trusting the

1 staff, again, to prioritizing that and to make appropriate decisions about when
2 in-person work and in-person interactions are important, so.

3 We did convert the recent paper, the info paper, into a voting
4 matter, and I think we, by polling, agreed that October 31 was the date in order
5 to prompt a timely decision on this, knowing that there's a lot of high interest on.
6 I'm certainly committed to meeting that goal.

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

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you. So I really
9 appreciate the effort that was put into the Flexible Work Model. I also believe
10 it's important for the Commission to be able to weigh in on this proposal to
11 ensure that all perspectives are considered.

12 I realize that telework is not a one-size-fits-all approach to
13 anything. And what works for some people is not going to work for others. But
14 I do believe that the agency mission is paramount in all of it and needs to be
15 considered in all the decisions that we make.

16 The Chair referred to the EDO's role in his opinion as he felt
17 that. And it is true that we do delegate certain aspects of the day-to-day
18 operations to the EDO. But as I said in my vote on Commissioner Caputo's
19 COM back in April, I believe that the issue of telework as it stands right now
20 could have long-lasting impacts, not just on our employees, but on all
21 stakeholders.

22 And we as commissioners have to be responsible not just to
23 what happens inside these walls, but how we -- how things are happening
24 outside of these walls as well.

25 So therefore I do view it as a policy decision and that the

1 Commission should have an opportunity to weigh in on it. And I do agree with
2 the Chair that October 31 is a very important date. And quite honestly I feel like
3 my vote will come in way before that.

4 CHAIR HANSON: Commissioner Caputo.

5 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: As Commissioner Wright
6 mentioned, I authored a COM on this topic because I firmly believe that this
7 should be a voting matter for the Commission.

8 The nature of how we use telework going forward is going to
9 have far-reaching implications for how we operate and how we conduct our
10 work, the level of teamwork we have, the level of personnel interaction, the level
11 of role model and mentoring that we offer new employees. And once this
12 decision is made, it's not easily revisited.

13 And so the ramifications of making this decision and the long-
14 term implications of making this decision really should be based on a sound
15 foundation of analysis. And two years nearly since reentry would have been a
16 sufficient time to gather data. I think the staff's proposal to do a one-year pilot
17 specifically to gather data I think was a very smart approach.

18 And I'm concerned that without that data, we're really left in a
19 position of not having a clear understanding or a clear expectation of how this
20 will ultimately be implemented and what the impacts will be.

21 So as Commissioner Wright mentioned, as commissioners,
22 we are charged with the leadership of this agency. We are accountable to
23 Congress for the leadership of this agency. So there will be a lot of eyes and
24 accountability for us inherent in how we either choose to act or not act on the
25 EDO's proposal.

1 Utilization of telework does not relinquish the agency's ability
2 or responsibility to taxpayers, licensees, applicants, and stakeholders for
3 transparent, efficient, risk-informed, and evidence-based, data-driven decisions.

4 Based on how effectively we use data and analysis to
5 underpin decisions in safety and security, we should have a very strong
6 capability to analyze data and have a firm foundation for making this significant
7 of a decision. Data-driven analytics should be second nature to us, given our
8 level of expertise and capability in the technical side.

9 Several of the concerns that I raised in the COM last April I
10 mentioned in my opening statement as well, but they've largely been
11 unaddressed.

12 The nature of how we are going to address onboarding such
13 a significant complement of our agency, how this may exacerbate recruitment
14 and retention concerns for resident inspectors, for Headquarters Operations
15 Officers, for other people within NSIR and other areas that, for folks that don't
16 have portable work. How does that reshape the nature of our agency and how
17 people choose to alter the positions that they hold and the work that they
18 choose to do.

19 And lastly, I think there will be a significant amount of scrutiny
20 on this decision in the context of whether we can effectively embrace and
21 address such innovative technologies if we are fundamentally working remotely.

22 And I understand that this model is intended to be flexible, but I think in its
23 flexibility will leave first-line supervisors with a tremendous amount of
24 responsibility but also a tremendous amount of pressure.

25 Any time that there is a decision made outside or in addition

1 to the minimum four hours, that will be subject to dispute, criticism, second-
2 guessing. I think that's a tremendous responsibility for first-line supervisors to
3 have to absorb, and I think the nature of that dynamic probably drives us to a
4 default position of four hours a week.

5 And I question whether that's really a sound position to lead
6 the agency, particularly when coming back from that decision would be so
7 incredibly difficult.

8 And I'll just be clear, I fully support workplace flexibilities. I'm
9 a working mother, I use workplace flexibilities. My office is flexible. We are in
10 the office three to four days a week. But if I am traveling, my employees work
11 from home while I'm gone.

12 So it is very flexible, but it also means that we spend a
13 significant amount of time together in person as an office sharing ideas, sharing
14 information, building a sense of teamwork and the cross-pollination that comes
15 with simply being in the same office together. And I think that's important.

16 I think one of the things that, you know, the nature of how we
17 are struggling with telework is no different than how the rest of the federal
18 government is struggling with the issue and private industry as well, trying to
19 strike the right balance. OMB directed federal agencies to substantially
20 increase meaningful in-person work.

21 Now I understand from the paper that apparently they have
22 approved the proposal, but I think it's perhaps a difficult position for this agency
23 to be in if other agencies like the Department of Energy are moving toward
24 three days a week in person, and yet we are shifting away from that down to
25 four hours a week.

1 So I think that's a -- perhaps the divergence of our approach
2 from the rest of the federal government gives me pause.

3 And the last thing that I will say is I recognize that this has
4 been disruptive to people's schedules, you know, for the last several years, first
5 through COVID, then reentry. There's been a lack of clarity about what next
6 steps would be. A lack of clarity of what the plans were, when the decision
7 would be made, how we would get there, false starts.

8 So I definitely sympathize with the frustration and the lack of
9 trust that goes with a very fractured communication on this topic. It's a topic
10 that is so important to each and every one of you and the nature of how you
11 conduct your work and manage your families.

12 So I recognize that this has not been an ideal situation for any
13 of us, and I urge your patience as we reach a decision and move forward.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Commissioner Crowell.

16 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you. I'm going to try to
17 answer without retreading the ground that's already been covered.

18 I'm going to be pretty candid with you all, which those of you
19 who've gotten to know me know that that's how I generally am. I don't like the
20 work telework. It's a misnomer. I like the word work, it's what we all do.

21 And it's -- I really don't care whether you're getting your work
22 done at a desk here at headquarters, from some other location, while you're on
23 the road, as a part of your job, visiting sites or licensees.

24 You all know whether you're doing what your job entails. And
25 your supervisor knows it. And if you are a supervisor, you know if your

1 employees are doing it. And the answer to whether you're getting your work
2 done is different for every person in this room and listening -- and every
3 employee at the agency.

4 Which is why it is inherently difficult if not impossible to put a
5 magic number on a ratio of in-person versus external work. And it's why I
6 prefer to just call it work. It's how are we getting the mission done.

7 I support the EDO's role in these administrative delegations.
8 However, on this particular topic it is an inflection point that is so momentous
9 and important and with such impact that I don't think it's incorrect for the
10 Commission to make sure that they feel like the EDO and the Commission is as
11 much in sync as possible in setting the direction.

12 I will tell you that I'm the commissioner who stayed
13 implementation of the plan through October 31, and I did that intentionally
14 because my hope was that it would give time for the commissioners to, you
15 know, really think on this topic, talk to each other, and try to find as much
16 common ground and unanimity as possible.

17 I think it's incredibly important to have as much unanimity as
18 possible because the direction that's set at the top flows down. And if there's a
19 perceived division or split, it will have impacts on the agency. So I'm hoping
20 that in due course, before the 31st for sure, I also hope it's well in advance of
21 that, we can come to some sort of resolution here.

22 It was important for me personally. I was never going to vote
23 on it, on the paper before this week at the very least because it's a disservice to
24 all of you if I did that before being able to have the opportunity to hear from all
25 of you.

1 And I'll say it's a disservice to Dan to not hear whatever
2 comes his way on Thursday before the House hearing. So there's a lot
3 happening this week that's going to be instructive for all of us in how we move
4 forward.

5 It is very much a decision that we need to make as an
6 agency, as a family. But we're not able to make that decision in isolation of
7 what others in the federal family and other agencies are doing and what the
8 expectations are on the agencies, particularly with the amount of expected work
9 we have going forward.

10 So I'm hoping we can find a way to strike that right balance. I
11 will tell you, whether you're the NRC or any other federal agency, whether you
12 set a very loose guidelines or very set in-person telework thresholds, you're
13 going to get it wrong the first time. Because no one knows what the world looks
14 like going forward.

15 It's going to take a test case. It's going to take a period of
16 time in which we figure out what actually is working well and what's not working
17 well. So at the very least, I think we all need to be prepared for a period of trial
18 and error, reflection, and fine-tuning.

19 And if we're looking for absolutes coming out of the gate, I
20 think we're short-sighted in attempting to do that. We need to look at what the
21 evidence shows about how we can meet our mission and hopefully strike that
22 right balance over a reasonable period of time. But I don't want to enhance any
23 of the whiplash we've all, you all have already experienced.

24 So this is the time to take a breath and get it as right as we
25 can and be as reflective as possible and manage our expectations collectively

1 as best as possible.

2 So thank you.

3 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Crowell.

4 Hiruy?

5 MR. HADGU: So as I stated earlier, the telework question
6 was in two parts, but a lot of the -- the questions in the second part were
7 answered as part of the first part.

8 So the second question says, Does the Commission plan to
9 increase transparency in the status and timelines of Commission votes? For
10 example, it is now common for Commission voting on rulemaking to take years.
11 These delays are discouraging to the staff, who work hard to deliver
12 rulemaking packages to the Commission on schedule.

13 The delays also make it a challenge for the staff to accurately
14 prepare and execute the budget for follow-on activities, such as addressing
15 public comments and preparing final rule packages and to be able to
16 communicate the status of rulemaking to stakeholders.

17 CHAIR HANSON: Okay. Thanks, Hiruy.

18 Let's -- again, I think we'll all have the opportunity to weigh in
19 here. Let me start with something I guess of a public service announcement.

20 You know, commissioner votes are not distributed to the
21 entire staff when they're submitted. In fact, you know, Commission votes
22 remain non-public until the voting process is complete, unless a commissioner
23 directs otherwise.

24 And they, you know, so there is some amount of I don't want
25 to call it a lack of transparency. But just the internal Commission procedures

1 were drafted in a way to kind of allow for the deliberative process to play out in
2 order to kind of minimize external pressure on the Commission while we work
3 amongst ourselves to resolve policy differences and work out differences on
4 things like rulemaking.

5 I recognize sometimes that this, you know, lack of
6 transparency, again for lack of a better term, can be frustrating to people. But if
7 folks are interested in seeing the status of SECY papers, you can go to the
8 EDO's SharePoint site, and there's a tab there I think that's Commission vote
9 status, where folks can see where an individual matter before the Commission
10 kind of stands.

11 And then in terms of the text of the vote, there might be some
12 other way for folks to do that, either contacting the PM or something else. And
13 even then it might not be available again because the internal Commission
14 procedures were set up for a reason.

15 Voting on Commission papers has been a very high priority
16 for me. But also let me say look, I mean, each commissioner gets to set their,
17 you know, sets their own priorities and the things that they're interested in and
18 the things that they want to focus on. And I, you know, I firmly believe that my
19 colleagues are hardworking and that they're focused on the things that they
20 think are most important to the agency.

21 But I also know that in some cases that the, you know, the
22 length of time can be frustrating for the staff, right. It makes it hard to, you
23 know, sometimes it cascades through other rulemakings and can impact that. It
24 can impact contracting needs and budget needs and other kinds of things.

25 And so I think also that not all SECY papers are created

1 equal, right. Some of them are very big and complicated. I think we've all
2 been, you know, we all started working on Part 53 as soon as it came in, and
3 some of us are still working on it. Because it was a big and complicated
4 rulemaking.

5 But we've also made some progress on things too. Look, I
6 have the window of the window that I have, which is you know, when I started
7 back in 2020, I think that we had about 51, 50-ish open papers. We're down to
8 about 38, at least as of yesterday.

9 So I think, you know, and I want to thank my colleagues for
10 working on, continuing to work that -- work that inventory down. I was proud
11 last year, you know, I -- my office, we voted 55 papers. We put up a pretty
12 good pace on issues.

13 And like I said, not all of these things are created equal.
14 Some of them are going to take a while for the Commission to work through.
15 Sometimes the SRM takes months for us to work through and resolve
16 differences and come up with things. But some of these things are also easier,
17 and I think we can join together and work through these.

18 And I think in addition I fully agree that we are, as
19 commissioners we're accountable to a whole range of external parties. But I
20 also feel like as commissioners we should be accountable to the staff to render
21 as much as possible timely decisions on these things.

22 And I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue
23 to reduce the backlog of papers and move forward on some of these things.

24 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Sure. Yeah, why not. Why not.
25 So I remember the very first day I walked in the office and Annette rolled in

1 nine linear feet of papers, right? According to what the Chair just said, that may
2 be six feet now because we have reduced some. But it was a very daunting
3 thing as a new Commissioner, right?

4 And Brad just said he just realized his first anniversary. But
5 he's still learning, and his people are still coming up to speed on things. So it
6 takes time when you build an office and you have to bring people up or even
7 have staff changes within your office, right, to keep things moving.

8 The Chair is correct that each of us have our own priorities.
9 But one good thing that we do as Commissioners is not only do we talk with
10 each other about what our priorities are with the papers that are before us. But
11 our staff is engaged and trying to find out where we can reach common ground
12 on stuff quicker on those papers that are out there.

13 And we've done a really good job, I believe, in the last couple
14 of years of really focusing on that. And we have moved a lot of stuff. I know it's
15 not at the light speed that you would like.

16 But given the circumstances that we face at times, when you
17 lose a commissioner, that changes dynamics as well. So we are trying to get
18 things done. We talk about it regularly.

19 And we really are trying. We're being collegial with each
20 other in this and trying to move the things that can be moved as quickly as
21 possible. So I do appreciate your patience but also appreciate your input.

22 If there's something that is there, let us know what and why.
23 And we have to socialize it with the other offices as well. But we will pay
24 attention to it.

25 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Let me just start by saying if you

1 stop sending us papers, we'll crank through the backlog.

2 (Laughter.)

3 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Sometimes I can't help but feel
4 like the situation with the Commission and this revolving dynamic with the
5 papers that are before us is not so much different than the Rulemaking Center
6 of Expertise having to constantly have an inventory that they are working to.
7 Some they are finishing. Some are being added.

8 Some where priorities are being shifted and rethought based
9 on events or even being overtaken by events. So there is a constant shuffling
10 of priorities. Consensus building itself takes time.

11 I think all of you know that just in the nature of the work that
12 you do in resolving various positions and various contributions in your technical
13 work. And so that all happens before us. And as my colleagues have said,
14 some papers are simpler than others.

15 And some papers, I think at least for me, I engage in a fair
16 amount of personal study depending on the issue. And that takes time. And so
17 I think that's important to me not as a discredit to my staff but as a means of
18 ensuring for myself that I am very confident in the decision that I cast that I am
19 meeting the responsibility that was given to me in the position that I hold.

20 So doing a fair amount of study on my own is important to me.
21 And that is one aspect of this. But I do feel like as Commissions change, it
22 does perhaps become easier at times to coordinate and try to ensure that we
23 are all working on similar items in roughly a similar time frame because if each
24 of us sets priorities entirely different, then votes get cast on everything but
25 nothing comes to fruition. So I do thank the Chairman for the level of

1 coordination he has in that respect in keeping us posted on what he is currently
2 focused on so that we can sort of work accordingly where we agree with those
3 priorities and hopefully in a timely fashion reach consensus where we can.

4 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Let me just add a little bit to
5 the flavor that you've gotten from all of my colleagues here. Just as each of
6 them when they first started on the Commission, when I started, we see this
7 huge list of papers, most of which I couldn't even understand the titles of. And I
8 didn't know, like, whether I should start from the newest one or the oldest one
9 or somewhere in between.

10 And there is no perfect answer to that. And each one of those
11 papers that are on that list has its own sometimes tortured history of why it is on
12 there or why it has languished on there. And sorting through that is also a
13 challenge. And then you want to make sure that as a Commission you're
14 focused on things of similar importance and timing.

15 And we do, do a pretty good job of trying to communicate with
16 each other and balance those priorities and also communicate that with senior
17 leadership. And I think that part of the answer to this question is finding ways to
18 make sure that the appropriate level of information is getting from the
19 Commission and senior leadership down to the program and office and
20 individual staff level so you know what's going on. If you've had a hand in
21 writing a paper, you get some tangible feedback on why it may be languishing,
22 why it may not be the priority amongst other priorities on the list.

23 And so part of the success of any agency especially as you
24 get bigger is communication. And so I think we should reflect on whether
25 there's ways to better communicate with all of you about what is happening at

1 the commission level. And I think that the Commission, the Commissioners
2 themselves, our respective offices and the senior staff could discuss ways to
3 maybe do that better.

4 I'm not an expert on how things are currently communicated.
5 I'm sure there's bright spots and less bright spots. But I think it would go a long
6 way for all of you in just hearing the good, bad, or otherwise rather than the void
7 of no information at all.

8 So hopefully we can improve upon that. I will also say that a
9 lot of the topics we have before us are weighty. They're lengthy. They're
10 technically challenging, all of which we're up to as the professionals that we are.

11 I will say and I mentioned this to some of the senior folks,
12 career staff of the agency, is that I find myself reading some of these papers for
13 what's not being said. And that's a challenge for me. And it takes longer to get
14 through a topic when you're trying to figure out what's between the lines.

15 And when you're new to the Commission and you don't know
16 a question, you don't know what you don't know, having to read between the
17 lines is very challenging. So I would put some burden on all of you to make
18 sure that the product that comes up to the Commission and if you're at the point
19 where you're a reviewer at a senior level, the Commission is getting a succinct
20 paper but one that shows all sides and one where you're not having to ask the
21 reader to wonder what's not being said. And that will help expedite things quite
22 a bit from my perspective.

23 So that's just one bit of feedback. But overall, I'm about
24 getting stuff done. So if there's a sentiment out there that we need to move
25 faster, then we need to move faster. So I appreciate that.

1 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Hiruy?

2 CHAIR HANSON: Yeah, I think we're going to go to audience
3 questions I think in a -- we've got one more question submitted online and then
4 we're going to go to audience questions. I think that's the idea.

5 MR. HADGU: Multiple questions were received regarding
6 resident recruitment, retention, and staffing. Several of these questions were
7 combined for efficient response and voting. As regional and headquarters jobs
8 become more flexible, what additional incentives, both monetary and
9 nonmonetary, are you willing to consider for resident retention and recruitment?
10 For example, it would be easier for my family for me to drive 3.5 hours each
11 way to the regional office two days a week then to relocate again for another
12 resident tour.

13 What incentives would you be willing to consider to retain
14 residents like myself or to recruit our replacements? Are we looking into how
15 residents are not considered on call when in fact if something happens we have
16 to go in and the expectation is to maintain FFD and at least in Region 3 is that
17 you should be in within three hours? We have to adjust what is done during our
18 time off because of this way too often. I feel there should be some
19 compensation for this as they are on call pay guidelines.

20 This also becomes more burdensome when there is only one
21 resident on site. Addressing this could help with resident retention. Is the
22 agency considering going to a first 80 time schedule versus a first 40 hour
23 schedule for resident inspectors?

24 This change would allow additional flexibility during refueling
25 outages and responses to plant emergent events. This would also mitigate pay

1 cap restrictions on overtime. Is the agency prioritizing the resident retention
2 working group to determine the next best steps to address issues and
3 concerns?

4 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Hiruy. I'm going to just make a
5 couple of general remarks and I'll hand it over to Dan and/or Scott for some
6 additional details. And then we can bring it back up here and have my
7 colleagues go.

8 Several times already this morning, my colleagues have
9 expressed the importance of the resident inspector program and how important
10 they are to the mission of the agency. They're closest to the sites. They're the
11 true boots on the ground.

12 And oftentimes, they're the main representation of the agency
13 with the public. Their integrity is well respected from a technical standpoint. I
14 hear stories all the time about the value -- the added value that our residents
15 provide.

16 And in case anybody needed a reminder, it was our resident
17 inspectors who discovered the alkali silica reaction up in Seabrook as well as
18 the fact that just the credibility that they carry for the agency with the public and
19 community groups around the sites. And I deeply appreciate that. I'm aware of
20 some of the concerns.

21 I've had several briefings on this. Dan and Scott and Cathy
22 and the regional administrators all know that I expect them to develop and
23 maintain a robust resident inspector program. And I recognize that I think
24 having a position like Zach Hollcraft who's kind of monitoring the health of the
25 resident inspector real time adds a lot of value.

1 And I know the data coming out of that is showing that the
2 program is under a certain amount of stress. So I'm listening. I will say that in
3 all the conversations whether at the site or internally about this, my final
4 question is, okay, what do you need from me or what do you need from the
5 Commission?

6 Where do you need us to weigh in? And that has happened
7 on occasion, right? You guys will send us a paper and you need a decision on
8 X, Y, and Z. Okay, great.

9 But if there are things that can be done to improve the health
10 and the robustness of that program within the existing authorities, great. Go do
11 it because we share the overall goal. With that, I don't know, Dan, if there's
12 something else you want to add.

13 MR. DORMAN: Yeah. Thank you, Chair. I'm actually going
14 to turn it to Scott for a moment because Scott has set up a mini Jam for the
15 resident inspector program and all the leaders in their chain which is actually
16 occurring next week. So I'm going to turn it to Scott to highlight.

17 MR. MORRIS: I, yeah, first of all, really appreciate the
18 opportunity to address this question because it is extremely important. And it's
19 not lost on the senior leadership in the agency, myself included, of course. And
20 just to reflect what the Chair said and others have said about the importance of
21 this program to the credibility of this agency to our ability to be a strong,
22 independent regulator that our stakeholders have confidence in.

23 And that goes for all of our inspectors. But the really unique
24 aspect of the residents, of course, is that they're time limited at their site. And
25 there is a forced relocation as part of this.

1 And that unique nature has impacts on people, their families,
2 careers, et cetera. And again, none of that is lost on us. We have done a
3 number of surveys.

4 I myself have done a number of site visits and interactions
5 and getting out in the field as has Cathy, Dan, and others, certainly the regional
6 administrators. So we think we understand the challenges and the concerns
7 that you all face. We also think we understand that as professionals you
8 appreciate the importance of the role that you play in executing our mission and
9 the value serving in that function has for you personally and professionally and
10 to the agency.

11 So what we're intending to do here as Dan pointed out next
12 Tuesday as a matter of fact, we've set aside four hours where we will have an
13 opportunity for myself, for the four regional administrators, for the leadership in
14 NRR, the leadership in the regions, the middle management in the regions, the
15 branch chiefs, the first-line supervisors in the regions who supervise the
16 residents on a daily basis, and the resident inspectors themselves, including
17 those who have joined us as part of the resident inspector development
18 program. To have a fulsome respectful conversation, a dialogue, an interaction
19 to create transparency about what we know to be true about not only the
20 challenges but what's good about the program and to emphasize that there is a
21 level of not just acknowledgment but understanding and empathy about some
22 of those challenges. As a former resident and senior resident myself and
23 somebody who's moved a number of times in service to this agency and the
24 Navy before that, I get it.

25 But I also get that times have changed. Economies have

1 changed. The employment status of significant others has changed, et cetera.
2 So we're going to have this conversation.

3 I personally am really looking forward to having this dialogue
4 with that group. We're going to share data. The Chair mentioned Zach
5 Hollcraft in NRR who is kind of heads up the resident inspector recruitment and
6 retention working group which has representation not only from NRR but the
7 regions to share the data and the assessment that they've provided to the
8 senior leadership up to and including the Chair.

9 And we're going to show them that we've heard and we're
10 going to talk about what we've heard. We're going to talk about what we have
11 done, what's possible, what's -- and frankly, what's not possible. I think
12 somebody mentioned first 80.

13 I'm told that's just off the table unless we get some other kind
14 of significant, potentially legislative change or what have you. But there are
15 things that we can do, we have done, and intend to do. We want to talk about
16 that and be as open and honest and transparent as we can to ensure that we
17 have that unanimity of understanding and alignment, not only on the importance
18 of the job but what we can do to make it better.

19 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Scott. Any of my colleagues
20 would like to weigh in on this?

21 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Sure. So this is incredibly
22 important to the future of this agency. And this is something that I've been very
23 interested in since the beginning of time with the residents and anytime I go out.
24 I spend a significant amount of time talking to just the residents at the sites.

25 I know there's a working group going on. I've talked to

1 several members of the group. Even in the resident for a day program that I'm
2 doing for training, I spend the whole day with the resident. And we talk about
3 everything, and it's totally graveyard talk between me and them.

4 And I hear the concerns. You've got two income -- usually
5 professional income. And when somebody is asked to up and leave, you may
6 be economically wrecking a family now whereas before it was just maybe a one
7 income person and that was the inspector, right?

8 So those are big. And we have those -- we've changed it five
9 years, four years, seven years, whatever before. People are asked to rotate or
10 move. But even that is not the same today as maybe it used to be because
11 someone wants to be there permanently.

12 They may want to be a resident forever. And we need to be
13 able to offer that to them if they can. Objectivity, I get the objectivity thing that
14 we say that we use in measurements.

15 But I don't know that we've really ever gotten rid of somebody
16 because of objectivity. It's been rare. But I do know that they are -- residents
17 are moved out to provide support in other areas as up here.

18 And then they have people come in to peer review them as
19 well which I think is a very important thing that the agency does to help support
20 the residents. This is a total -- it's a really, really - of incredible importance to
21 the agency. And I hope -- Scott, I hope that this mini Jam goes very, very well
22 because they have ideas and we should be open to about anything.

23 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I have to say certainly from the
24 start of my term and I'm sure it pre-dates the start of my first term as a
25 Commissioner, residents are an essential component of this agency. And

1 challenges and concerns about the resident inspector program and recruitment
2 and retention certainly predate my time here. I think one of the things that I
3 struggle with as a Commissioner is hearing these concerns continually
4 expressed.

5 And so times change. People change. Some of the concerns
6 change. What I would be concerned about upon hearing that there's a mini
7 Jam in addition to -- I don't know if it's a working group or a standing committee,
8 I saw it referred to as a standing committee -- is that it's important to listen, but
9 it's important to act.

10 And what I would hate to see whether it's activities by the
11 working group or discussions coming out of the Jam is that ideas are offered,
12 and residents make contributions in hopes of improving the situation and then
13 actions are not taken.

14 There needs to be a response. It needs to be candid as Scott
15 mentioned, what's possible and what isn't possible. But discussion in and of
16 itself can't be the objective. The objective here needs to be the nature of
17 solving these recruitment and retention challenges for some of our most
18 essential employees in the agency.

19 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'm going to pick up right
20 where Commissioner Caputo left off. I've had a year on the Commission.
21 Every time I meet with resident inspectors, I'm hearing the same thing.

22 And for the most part, the concerns are valid. What I'm not
23 seeing is the action. This is not our most technically challenging topic across
24 the agency to solve. It's solvable. We just need to solve it.

25 I know there's some things within our control and some things

1 not within our control for coming up with solutions. But certainly for the things
2 that are within our existing authority, we need to start taking advantage of them
3 and we need to do it post haste. We don't have any time to lose.

4 Not just because we owe it to the existing resident inspector
5 crew but because it is an Achilles heel of the agency if we let this languish any
6 longer. So if it requires Commission action, I'm for it. Give it to me.

7 Anything is better than nothing at this point. But now we can
8 have the discussions, try to get it right. Try and have it be balanced an
9 appropriate.

10 I will also add that one of my concerns with the flexible work
11 paper is that it makes zero mention of positions like resident inspectors and
12 how they fare in a flexible work environment. And so it's adding insult to injury
13 in that regard from my perspective. So I hope we can take that into account as
14 well. Thanks.

15 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. I think with that, we're going to
16 go to questions from the room. If it's okay with my colleagues, I think originally
17 we were going to alternate kind of questions from the room and pre-submitted
18 questions.

19 But we're at 11:25, and we've got about 25 minutes to go I
20 think before we hand it over to Sheryl. So if we run out of folks coming to the
21 mics, then maybe we can switch back to the online questions. But otherwise, I
22 think we can maybe just kind of move ahead with folks in the room if people are
23 okay with that. So all right. Go ahead.

24 MR. CRISCIONE: Morning. I'm Larry Criscione with the
25 Office of Research. Nimble organizations, they really lead with their technical

1 staff the corporate support, kind of supports. And I don't want to minimize
2 anyone in this organization who's part of corporate support.

3 I think Office of Administration, OCHCO, OCIO, they're all
4 important. I don't want to minimize their work. But more calcified organizations,
5 they're given a budget and they work to it. And the technical staff have to
6 conform to what the support staff dictate to them.

7 And my questions about the Headquarters Operations
8 Officers. So we're givin' up Three White Flint in 2027. And we're moving the
9 HOO Office to -- the Headquarters Operations Office to -- right now I think the
10 plan is the third floor of One White Flint North.

11 And there's a security room on the second floor which makes
12 plumbing the third floor a little bit difficult. I attended a meeting about six weeks
13 ago where they were just starting to talk about kicking off that project to move
14 the HOO Office. And I talked to the -- one of the supervisors in the Office of
15 Administration.

16 And I just told them I wanted to make sure the HOOs are
17 going to have the amenities that they currently have, the past practice. Their
18 office is essentially a vault these days since September 11th. They got the
19 NORAD phone they got to listen to if there's a flight headed towards the nuclear
20 plant.

21 And inside that vault essentially, they've got a bathroom. And
22 that bathroom has a shower. And it has a shower because in 2010 the HOO
23 couldn't leave for a couple days because they were snowed in.

24 And I think it might've happened since then too. It's
25 happened a couple times since I've been at the agency. You've got a kitchen in

1 there. Same reason. You could get snowed in there.

2 And I was told none of that stuff is going to be there. There's
3 not even going to be a bathroom. All right. So there's two headquarters
4 operations officers.

5 If both of them are fully qualified and fully cleared, they can go
6 down the hall and go to the bathroom. But the reality is at about 20 percent of
7 the time, one person has to stay in the room at all times and it's because that
8 other person hasn't gotten their clearance yet or they haven't finished the quals
9 yet. And that's nothing that can be fixed. All right.

10 We don't control those clearances. All right. Your office
11 directors can tell you, the Commissioners, that we're going to get a handle on
12 that. Everyone is always going to be cleared going forward. They're full
13 garbage if they tell you that. All right.

14 That's not going to get fixed. The other thing is people are
15 going to retire. New people are going to come in and get qual'ed. No one is
16 ever going to be able to tell you that we're always going to have two qualified
17 people in there.

18 Anyone telling you that is full of garbage too. Going forward
19 in the future, there's going to be times when one person is stuck in that room for
20 12 hours, right? And that person is not going to soil themselves when they got
21 to go to the bathroom. All right.

22 If you don't give them a bathroom, they check in three times a
23 shift with DHS on a roll call. They're going to let the Department of Homeland
24 Security, their watch group, know that, hey, we're shut down for 20 minutes so
25 we can lock up the vault so I can go to the bathroom. All right. And when DHS

1 starts to question why that's happening several times a shift, it's not Jennifer
2 Golder in the Office of Admin that's going to be answering to the congressman,
3 all right, to our oversight committees.

4 It's going to be you four. Maybe it's going to be Dan, the
5 EDO. Maybe it's going to be Mirela, the office director for NSIR. But it's not
6 going to be the Office of Admin.

7 So we've approached Mirela on this, and she tells us how
8 important the headquarters operations officers are, right? And I believe her.
9 But what she won't tell us is that they're going to have a bathroom. What she
10 won't tell us is that they're going to be involved in designing their space.

11 And she won't tell us that because she's honest. She doesn't
12 want to lie to us. But I think it's messed up that the ultimate decision isn't with
13 Mirela, isn't with NSIR. It's going to be, like, she knows. It's going to be with
14 Admin.

15 And you can't go writing a blank check to the resident
16 inspectors, to the headquarters operations officers, to Research, NRR. I
17 understand that. You got to put a budget in there.

18 But it really should be the technical staff once you give them
19 that budget, deciding what they need. They ought to be running the show for
20 their spaces. They ought to be running the show for their telework program.

21 If the first-line supervisor and the technical staff can figure it
22 out, they ought to run the show. The HOOs know what they need in their office.
23 They need to be allowed to run that show.

24 Yes, they got to work within a budget that might get dictated
25 by Admin. But Admin shouldn't be telling them they're going to be on the third

1 floor where they can't run a bathroom. And I just wanted to take your
2 comments. And if you have any advice on what can be done so that Mirela can
3 commit to the HOOs that they're going to have a bathroom in their space, no
4 question about it, I'd appreciate knowing what that is. Thank you.

5 CHAIR HANSON: Thanks, Larry. The headquarters
6 operation center move is -- it's an incredibly complex project under a very tight
7 timeframe. And I'm just going to give advance kudos to everybody in NSIR and
8 Admin and the CIO's office and other places, CFO and others who are already
9 getting moving to kind of make this happen because it's got to -- we've got to be
10 out of there by I think sometime in 2027.

11 And that's not a target that we've set. That's a target that
12 General Services Administration set for us. And so I'm not in the weeds. That
13 sounds a little pejorative. I'm not in the details on the design of the space and
14 frankly nobody should want me to be.

15 I trust Dave and Mirela and Jennifer to -- and their deputies to
16 come up with some kind of collaborative approach amongst the three of them
17 that plans and budgets and executes this thing in a timely way that maintains
18 the core functions that we need in order to maintain that capability going
19 forward into 2027 and beyond. Yeah, please.

20 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: I guess the one thing that really
21 gives me pause in that is not just the concerns about making sure that the
22 space is appropriate to the needs of the people that are executing the work.
23 But also just about the ongoing challenges with qualifications and having
24 appropriate staffing. For years, certainly in my previous term but again, since
25 there's a constant reference to strategic workforce planning that is supposed

1 guide the agency and be a tool for ensuring that we have the right people in the
2 right place at the right time and that people receive the training that they need
3 to be prepared, et cetera.

4 And I find myself once again questioning whether that plan is
5 up to snuff or gathering dust on a shelf or whatnot. So whether it's this
6 situation, the concerns we encountered last year in the fuels meeting about
7 staffing shortages in fuels and staffing shortages again in subsequent license
8 renewals. I have an ongoing concern about the nature of strategic workforce
9 planning and whether it is meeting the needs. We are going through a massive
10 hiring effort. And I would hope that the nature of that hiring is specifically
11 targeting these crucial areas where we need expertise and I keep coming up
12 short.

13 CHAIR HANSON: Okay. Do we have someone else over
14 here?

15 MR. TRAVIS: Morning, Commissioners. A recent
16 Commission memo uses the phrase 'customers and the public' in the context of
17 applicants and licensees. And I was wondering if I could get the
18 Commissioner's individual views on that.

19 CHAIR HANSON: Customers and the public.

20 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah, for context --

21 CHAIR HANSON: It's like a spelling bee. Could you use that
22 in a sentence?

23 MR. TRAVIS: Yeah, I apologize. The implication that
24 applicants and licensees are customers but not the public in a recent
25 Commission memo. And to my knowledge, that would be a relatively novel

1 interpretation for the NRC.

2 CHAIR HANSON: Yeah, I guess -- and we can all kind of go
3 down the line here. I mean, I don't tend to think of it -- like, customers doesn't
4 really kind of enter into the lexicon. I mean, certainly, if you kind of go through
5 the principles of good regulation, right, we say that applicants and licensees
6 deserve timely and efficient decisions and those kind of things.

7 And the public deserves transparency and clear
8 communication and our commitment to protecting public health and safety and
9 the environment. So again, I'm not totally sure where that kind of came in. But
10 at least for myself, it's not really kind of how I think about it. I don't really think
11 of it as people kind of walking up to a window and saying, okay, look, here are
12 some fees and we're going to get this kind of product back or whatever.

13 And like I said, there's certainly the efficiency and the
14 reliability aspects of our principles of good regulation that sets expectations for
15 how we're going to behave vis-a-vis applicants and licensees. But I tend not to
16 think of them as customers because I think it implies something maybe a little
17 more transactional because while we're responsibility to them ultimately and
18 even primarily we're responsible to the public. Yeah, please.

19 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: And I don't really know the
20 document you're talking about. But I do think that we have a fiduciary
21 responsibility to those people who are paying us good money to review licenses
22 or applications or license amendments or whatever. We do owe them that.

23 And I think our principles speak to that. A customer is a
24 stakeholder. And so the public is a stakeholder. And I think that's very
25 important for us to recognize that they're no different -- to be treated any

1 differently than anyone else because we owe everybody that responsibility, that
2 accountability. And they are the American taxpayer. They are the American
3 public.

4 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'll chime in a little bit further
5 here. I don't exactly agree either. But I don't like the choice of words. I see
6 every external entity as a stakeholder, and stakeholders come in various
7 shapes, stripes, size, et cetera.

8 Obviously, those who are engaged in the licensing and
9 application process are one type of stakeholder and they meet a certain level of
10 responsiveness from the agency that they're statutorily required to do. But it is
11 not at the expense of other stakeholders.

12 And ultimately, the public is our stakeholder. And that is
13 where our ultimate responsibility is. That's who ultimately pays all of our
14 paychecks.

15 And yes, licensees, applicants, they pay fees. And that is
16 what helps underwrite the service that we are statutorily required to provide.
17 But those fees that they pay, more often than not, are based on the backs of
18 rate payers, taxpayers, average people. So it is all the public, and that's
19 ultimately who our responsibility is to.

20 [Noise from someone's phone]

21 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Sorry. I don't have a phone
22 number either.

23 (Laughter.)

24 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Yeah, I would agree. I think
25 that's an awkward, not very appropriate choice of terminology. I think, I mean,

1 yes, we have a fiduciary responsibility to those that are paying fees that we are
2 billing them for the nature of our work.

3 And as our principles say, taxpayers and licensees are
4 entitled to the best possible administration. So I do agree with Commissioner
5 Wright that we have a fiduciary responsibility there. But we also have a
6 responsibility to stakeholders.

7 As the Chairman said and Commissioner Crowell, taxpayers
8 are paying the bill too. And so to the extent that we have a responsibility for
9 transparency and openness and being responsive to questions and concerns
10 from the public, I think there may be a distinction there. But there's no less of a
11 need for us to exhibit our best possible administration and professionalism and
12 courtesy in dealing with both categories.

13 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Over here.

14 MR. TETTER: Yeah, so my question was helped to be
15 developed by some of my colleagues throughout the agency. And it goes to
16 opening -- kind of couple opening remarks by Chair Hanson and also
17 Commissioner Crowell about being direct and seeing our faces. So in light of
18 the conflicting information surrounding COVID vaccines and masks, including
19 an acknowledgment from Dr. Birx, White House Coronavirus Response
20 Coordinator, from 2020 to 2021 that vaccines never prevented transmission,
21 acknowledgment by the NIH that N95 masks are ineffective in stopping COVID
22 transmission, and the reported adverse effects of prolonged mask use through
23 healthcare professional studies. Should we prioritize scientific evidence and
24 empower staff to make their own decisions about mask wearing? Or should we
25 following the strongly encouraged Executive Order 13991, even though it's not

1 mandatory for independent agencies such as NRC and lacks scientific basis?

2 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you for that question. I think
3 throughout the pandemic, we followed Center for Disease Control guidance.
4 Obviously, there were local conditions also. We paid attention to what was
5 going on in Maryland and Montgomery County here at headquarters.

6 And I know the regional offices did the same in their parts of
7 the country in terms of local guidance. Should the coronavirus or some other
8 novel virus as it were, rear its head, I would expect us to continue to follow the
9 advice of the experts in other government agencies and follow the best
10 direction in order to keep the staff and folks in the agency safe. So I don't
11 know, Dan, if there's anything you wanted to add to that.

12 MR. DORMAN: I would just note that we continue to follow
13 CDC guidance. We haven't talked about COVID in a long time thankfully. But
14 we do have COVID -- it continues to be monitored in OCHCO and around all of
15 our facilities. So that if something did spike up, we would follow CDC guidance
16 going forward.

17 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Can I just add to that since I
18 was mentioned in the question? It's a fair question. Honestly, though, I just
19 think we need to start moving forward and looking ahead rather than looking
20 backward.

21 If you're sick, stay home. If you're sick and you need to be in
22 the office, have respect for your fellow employees and make sure you isolate
23 yourself or wear a mask. COVID for all intents and purposes is becoming as
24 routine as the flu at this point.

25 So be respectful of your friends and colleagues. It doesn't

1 have to be any more complicated than that. And I think we'll all be better for it.
2 So I'd like to have a forward looking perspective on just how we treat others
3 with respect to what is now becoming routine sicknesses where we need to
4 take into account the different vulnerabilities we each have and take
5 appropriate precaution.

6 CHAIR HANSON: Please.

7 MS. HOOD: I want to first say thank you for this opportunity.
8 There are not a lot of organizations that allow the staff to have this much
9 conversation. And I appreciate you also sharing how you all are experiencing
10 the work that we have in the agency and how you're trying to also step out.
11 Commissioner Wright, I see you do that a lot, and I appreciate that.

12 But I also wonder for some of the other members of the
13 Commission how much are you really mindful of what we truly due in different
14 aspects. I'm hearing that your workload just like our workload because that's
15 how it got there is a lot for us to do. And as an agency, we are smaller than
16 many high schools in this area, not to mention the country.

17 And as a result of that, the work that we do, we are aware that
18 we do magnificent work. We don't come to this agency just because of
19 something. A lot of us are here and stay here and have been here for almost
20 20 years myself because we believe in the mission.

21 There's rarely anybody in the world that does what we do.
22 There's no other country that regulates and monitors and supports the safety of
23 nuclear power plants as much as we do. So we know that we add value.

24 We are clear of the expertise that we bring. But there are
25 moments that it does not seem especially when you appear before Congress

1 that you convey that on our behalf because you are our voice. You are the
2 ones to help them understand that when they want us to go faster, to do more,
3 all these expressive things, it takes time.

4 Because as we get information from the licensees, granted
5 they are stakeholders, but we have to whittle away the safety factors associated
6 with every nuclear plant, with every license amendment that comes into this
7 agency. And when we take the time to make adjustments in our rules, when we
8 take the time to make adjustments in our work, it's not because we are trying to
9 take forever to do it.

10 It is because you are relying on our expertise. It is because
11 you rely on us to do what we do best. So I just ask that when you appear
12 before those outside of this room that you convey that on our behalf.

13 Because the things that you want rushed in my mind doesn't
14 seem to be the things that should be rushed as was stated by you all as well.
15 There are some elements being a human construct of what we have to do here
16 in this agency that should be picked up. How are we managing with our
17 resident inspectors? How we're working with telework, those things, I think --
18 and I get that we are process oriented and we take our time.

19 And that is a beautiful element. But those pieces are the
20 things that we should walk through quicker, not forcing the staff to try to move
21 faster through their workload, being piled on more and more. And I get that we
22 are trying to hire, and it is great.

23 But it is also difficult when you are in the trenches to get more
24 work and being asked because it's being presented by individuals outside this
25 agency that we aren't working fast enough, doing enough, or moving through

1 the process quicker. Some things, because we have kept this country safe,
2 need to work on its schedule. We get the dollars. But we should be more
3 concerned, I think, in elements of safety. Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. I appreciate those remarks
6 very much, and I appreciate the admonition to go out and continue at least in --
7 I hope this comes through, at least in my public remarks, to highlight so many
8 things that we're doing well. If I look back over the last even ten years of this
9 agency, the amount of learning that has gone on and the application of that
10 learning to new challenges is really astounding, right?

11 I mean, think about how much this agency learned doing
12 Vogtle and processing the ITAACs. Think about how much we learned on
13 NuScale about how to structure efficient and timely and effective, right?
14 focused on safety reviews and how we took all of that.

15 And then we turned around and applied that to Kairos and
16 finished it three months early and on budget, right? And how we're getting --
17 we're fixing -- we just admitted the Hermes 2 thing. And we're going to take all
18 those lessons and apply it to the next thing.

19 Think about how we were getting ready in the next, I don't
20 know, nine whatever months to issues the next iteration of the generic aging
21 lessons learned that then will be applied to subsequent license renewals. I'm
22 not enamored of one particular deadline or another. This review should take X
23 months or that review should take X months because the key thing first of all is
24 safety.

25 And the second thing is that I'm not in a position to say to go

1 through those steps and say, well, here are the things that are really important
2 and here are not. I'm looking to the staff to say, okay, review your work. You
3 tell me what you've known.

4 Again, we're getting back to that high confidence
5 organization, right? Rely on your technical expertise to know what's important
6 and to communicate that up to us so that then we can go highlight that and
7 communicate the importance of the work that this agency does every day. So
8 thank you for your remarks very much. I appreciate it.

9 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Before we move on, I just
10 want to say that I really appreciate those comments. Wish I could bottle you up
11 and take you with me out on the road.

12 (Laughter.)

13 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And I know you're speaking
14 for all of your colleagues. But can you come back up and tell me so I can hear
15 your voice, tell me your name and what you do?

16 MS. HOOD: Tanya Hood. I'm a project manager currently in
17 a decommissioning branch of NMSS. Been here for almost 18 years -- well,
18 over 18 years now -- which is why I share what I share because I've seen the
19 changes in Commission, the changes in what's being asked of us, and also
20 clear about why I show up every day.

21 COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, Tanya.

22 COMMISSIONER CAPUTO: Thank you. And I as well
23 appreciate the passion with which that statement is made. And certainly I don't
24 believe security and safety should be compromised in pursuit of a schedule.
25 But nor should it be an excuse for an indefinite review.

1 The reality is we are the only place that can make decisions
2 on these technologies that enable these industries and organizations to function
3 and do what they do. And with that comes a responsibility to execute our
4 decision making in a timely way. Not at the expense of safety and security but
5 to achieve it.

6 And so I appreciate the statement and the nature of what's
7 been said. But I also -- when I hear this and I now and then will hear comments
8 from executives about concerns that their staff are overworked, working
9 overtime, et cetera, I do have to reflect back on resources and where we are.
10 And when I look at our resources, we've seen a 44 percent decrease in the
11 hourly work since 2016.

12 So that, to me, is a sharp decrease that means all of our
13 oversight and licensing work is now only 21 percent of our budget. So to the
14 extent that any employees are feeling stress or overwork, I think that brings up
15 questions about management, whether workloads are being adequately shared
16 or organized, whether too many ancillary activities are being piled onto people's
17 plates in addition to their core work. I think it represents a host of other
18 questions as to why it now becomes such a burden for employees, our
19 technical employees, to really execute that priority work and the reason that
20 we're here.

21 Our primary mission as enshrined in the Energy
22 Reorganization Act of 1974 that created the agency was licensing and other
23 regulatory activities. And so to a certain extent, I kind of wonder if there isn't a
24 need to get back to basics here and make sure that the nature of how we
25 operate and how we conduct the work is simpler to enable people to do their

1 best work on things that are that top priority. So thank you very much for your
2 comments today.

3 CHAIR HANSON: Please.

4 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you so much. I've seen
5 you around the agency. I've seen you out and about. And I appreciate you
6 very much for what you just said.

7 And I do agree with the comments that you've heard up here.

8 And it comes back down to resources, right? And I know when I go around the
9 agency, especially pre-COVID when you were in your offices and stuff, I could
10 tell because you would tell me.

11 You would share what you're doing, how important it was. I
12 knew how it impacted what I was doing on the 18th floor. And I was able to
13 create that relationship where I can come to you and ask you for your help. Or
14 my team could come and ask for your help.

15 So if there's an issue in that resource area or if you feel that
16 you are at a point where you don't know what to do, I know that we're there to
17 enable the safe use, right, and reasonable assurance of adequate protection is
18 our mission and protecting the environment for the public, right? But if you feel
19 like you're not being listened to by your superior, your supervisors or others,
20 again, I encourage reach out to us too because what you do is incredibly
21 important to me as a Commissioner. I rely on what you do, and I have to be
22 able to do that. And so I think not just you but everybody in this room.

23 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you. Now I'd like to invite Sheryl
24 Sanchez, President of the National Treasury Employees Union to make
25 remarks on behalf of the union. Sheryl?

1 MS. SANCHEZ: Hey guys, good morning, Chair Hanson,
2 Commissioners, senior managers, and most importantly bargaining unit
3 employees. I'm Sheryl Sanchez, President of NTEU, Chapter 208. And I'm
4 pleased to provide the union's remarks this morning.

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

12 When I sign off at the end of emails, I often use the phrase in
13 solidarity as the complimentary close. I use this phrase because it signifies
14 what our union is, a group of individuals with a common purpose, striving for the
15 same goal. After our recent discussions with the agency on the flexible work
16 model, I know that NTEU and the agency are in solidarity on many aspects of
17 telework since we reached agreements.

18 The post-pandemic world continues to struggle with the
19 telework question. This is because the prevalence of post-pandemic telework
20 is a recent development. There's limited data with which to predict with
21 certainty long-term changes in the way organizations will conduct their business
22 in the future.

23 What we do know is that the telecommunication technology
24 we have today is far superior to what existed pre-pandemic. Still many
25 companies are too concerned about the unknowns to fully embrace what this

1 technology has to offer and how it will inevitably change our workplaces. The
2 NRC has an advantage over many of these companies because we have been
3 making significant decisions in the face of uncertainty for decades.

4 And we are very good at it. The flexible work model is a
5 particularly good model for the NRC because it embraces the five principles of
6 risk informed decision making. First, it is consistent with all federal laws,
7 regulations, and negotiated agreements about telework.

8 Second, there's depth by having both the employee and
9 supervisor understand the day-to-day work needs to determine when in-office
10 presence is beneficial. Third, it provides managers the authority they need to
11 ensure that employees are where they need to be when they need to be there
12 to get the work done. Fourth, it recognizes the data that day to day shows the
13 risk of embracing telework is very small while the risk of not embracing it is
14 large due to the negative impact on employee retention, morale, hiring, and
15 agency culture.

16 Finally, it monitors agency performance using the same
17 metrics we've been using for years to ensure that we continue to be an effective
18 and efficient regulator. Implementation of the proposed flexible work model
19 after months of review and working group analysis including the Office of
20 Management and Budget approval simply makes sense. In my comments at
21 last year's Commission meeting, I noted that for the first time ever our 2021
22 FEVS score of 20 out of 25 fell below the median for medium-sized agencies.

23 I'm sad to report that our 2022 FEVS score of 21 out of 27 for
24 medium-sized agencies remains in the lower quartile. Our engagement and
25 satisfaction score dropped from 69.4 to 66.5. Nineteen of the 27 medium-sized

1 agencies saw an increase in their engagement and satisfaction score.

2 Two did not have a score from last year to compare. And
3 only six, including the NRC, saw a decrease. Every week, the agency provides
4 NTEU data on employee gains and losses.

5 In preparation for this meeting, I reviewed all the data for
6 fiscal year 2023 from October 1st, 2022 through September 9th, 2023. I did a
7 very basic analysis of employees hired versus employees leaving the agency.
8 The only employees I removed from the gains and losses were co-op and
9 summer students because they do not represent an actual gain or loss due to
10 their temporary employment.

11 As most of you know, our target is to hire 400 new employees
12 this year, a goal that is much higher than prior years. This year, hiring has
13 increased. But an analysis of this data is sobering.

14 Between October 1st, 2022 and the end of the year,
15 December 31st, 2022, the agency had 67 gains and 67 losses. We had 44
16 employees leave the agency the last week of December which is not at all
17 unexpected. But we should also anticipate the same or more employees
18 leaving this year.

19 What is sad to me is when employees report that they wanted
20 to work until they were 62 but decided to retire earlier because they're so
21 discouraged. With all the new employees coming in lately, retaining such
22 employees, even for a few years, would be a great asset to the agency for
23 purposes of succession planning, knowledge transfer, and mentoring. For the
24 entire fiscal year from October 1st, 2022 until September 9th, 2023, we had 299
25 gains and 177 losses for a net gain of only 122 employees.

1 We cannot hire and train employees faster than we're losing
2 them. Even with the highly qualified employees we do hire, with a few
3 exceptions like hiring back employees who left the agency, the new employees
4 need to be trained. More sobering is looking at the expertise we have flooding
5 out our doors where that loss could've been avoidable.

6 But there is good news, and that is the implementation of the
7 flexible work model would be one highly effective tool in turning around this
8 trend. Offering flexibility will provide a competitive advantage in attracting and
9 retaining the best talent. This would have to be combined with offering full-time
10 telework to have greater access to the best qualified workers that may not be
11 willing to relocate.

12 How can the agency exclude qualified workers in other
13 geographic areas if the work is 100 percent portable and believe that they are
14 hiring the very best? The pandemic has taken a huge toll on the agency, the
15 country, and the world. Recently we are seeing some companies pushing to
16 have their employees return to the offices.

17 The desire may be to have things be the way they were
18 before the pandemic. But we can never return to the way things were. The
19 advancement of telecommunication technology and a workforce that is
20 comfortable with it and a hybrid work environment are the silver linings of a
21 horrible pandemic.

22 We should also acknowledge that sometimes we see the past
23 through rose colored glasses. Maybe the good old days weren't as good as we
24 remember they were. This reminds me of a story of an event that I attended
25 roughly 28 years ago.

1 After recently seeing the movie Oppenheimer, I recalled an
2 event that I attended to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Trinity test
3 site at Los Alamos. There was a speaker who worked for the Manhattan
4 Project as a young engineer. After the talk, he had another man who was a
5 current employee of the laboratory walk toward me.

6 Of course, I thought it was because of the terribly clever
7 question that I asked earlier but it wasn't. The speaker asked my husband if
8 anyone ever told him he bore a striking resemblance to Klaus Fuchs. This is
9 not the point of the story.

10 But since I re-remembered it and it's funny, I included it. But
11 the point is in a conversation with the two men, the laboratory employee who
12 was an older health physicist actually said something like, I really miss the good
13 old days of above ground weapons testing when you could find stuff in the fish.
14 And so I tried a little laugh, but I thought it was a terrible joke.

15 And my husband whispered in my ear that he thought the
16 man was serious. The point is that memory is subjective and imperfect. And
17 we should not judge today's environment based on past beliefs.

18 It was apparent during the flexible work model discussions
19 that the agency is not judging telework policy on pre-pandemic beliefs. We are
20 in a sweet spot in time where the employees want the flexible work model. The
21 agency at the OCHCO and EDO level want the flexible work model.

22 And NTEU wants it implemented as soon as possible. And
23 OPM gave it a blessing. This is what is best for the agency and the agency's
24 safety mission.

25 Any delay in implementation is not in the best interest of the

1 NRC. I'm not sure if everyone including the Commission is aware, but NTEU
2 and the agency have been in solidarity on other MOUs lately.

3 We signed an MOU to move our employees off the 11th and
4 13th floors of One White Flint. And we reached an agreement in principle on
5 hoteling. We are playing well with each other and we are making great
6 progress.

7 But the hoteling MOU is contingent on the implementation of
8 the flexible work model. The move MOU allows 11th and 13th floor employees
9 temporary full-time telework if they so desire and provides office space for
10 those times when the employees either need to or want to be in the office. But
11 the MOU grants the telework in two pay period increments. And NTEU must
12 come back and ask if we need to extend it.

13 If we do not have the MOU on hoteling in place which is, as I
14 said, contingent on the implementation of the flexible work model, we'll have to
15 ask to extend the full-time telework past the original two pay periods for
16 employees moving off of the 11th and 13th floor. So it's not just the delay in
17 providing our employees the flexibility they desire. Any delay in implementation
18 of the flexible work model impacts two other agreements between the agency
19 and NTEU that both parties have worked hard to reach agreement on to
20 support the agency and its employees through a big transition with NRC's
21 physical footprint.

22 The Commission has often asked the staff to be the risk
23 informed regulator you believe they should be to make decisions in a timely
24 manner and to be willing to move forward in the face of uncertainty. As
25 president of NTEU Chapter 208, I am now asking the same of the Commission.

1 Please allow the implementation of the flexible work model on the originally
2 proposed schedule. Thank you for your attention.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIR HANSON: Thank you, Sheryl, for your remarks. All
5 right. This brings us to the end of our time together this morning. Hiruy, thank
6 you very much. Great job.

7 Thank you all for being here. And thank you for your time and
8 your attention and thank you for your service to our country. Thank you for your
9 dedication of the agency. It's a great honor for me to serve alongside you.
10 With that, I bring the meeting to a close.

11 (Applause.)

12 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at
13 12:04 p.m.)