

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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34TH REGULATORY INFORMATION CONFERENCE (RIC)

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COMMISSIONER WRIGHT PLENARY

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TUESDAY,

MARCH 8, 2022

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The Technical Session met via Video-
Teleconference, at 9:45 a.m. EST, David A. Wright,
Commissioner, NRC, presiding.

PRESENT:

DAVID A. WRIGHT, Commissioner, NRC

ANDREA VEIL, Director, Office of Nuclear Reactor
Regulation, NRC

P R O C E E D I N G S

10:46 a.m.

MS. VEIL: Good morning, everyone, and welcome back. I have the honor of introducing Commissioner David A. Wright. The Honorable David A. Wright was first sworn in as a Commissioner of the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission on May 30th, 2018. He is currently serving a term ending on June 30th, 2025.

Before joining the NRC, Commissioner Wright served as energy and water consultant and policy advisor on nuclear waste issues. He is a former President of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and served as Vice Chairman and Chairman of the South Carolina Public Service Commission.

He was also elected Councilman and Mayor in Irmo, South Carolina, and to the South Carolina House of Representatives. A colon cancer survivor, Commissioner Wright is a strong advocate for cancer awareness and education. He is a proud father and grandfather and has enjoyed umpiring baseball for nearly 50 years. He's also a graduate of Clemson University.

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Commissioner Wright, we look forward to your remarks.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Good morning, and welcome to the NRC's 2022 Regulatory Information Conference, also known as the RIC. My name is David Wright, and I've had the honor of serving as an NRC Commissioner since May 24th of 2018, which was also my late father's birthday.

This is my third RIC as a Commissioner. As I stand here today, I never imagined that my first RIC would be my only in-person RIC so far. But I think it's safe to say that none of us imagined many of the things that we've had to deal with over the past several years with COVID and how it's impacted our personal and professional lives.

I wish we were meeting down the street at the Marriott because I miss seeing everyone in person. But at the same time, I'm grateful that we are able to gather this way, share information, and include a broader audience given the capabilities of technology, in particular increasing participation in general, and especially with our counterparts from around the world.

Before I begin my formal remarks, I'd

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like to congratulate my colleagues on their plenary remarks and publicly acknowledge how much I appreciate their friendship, their work ethic, and their collegiality. My appreciation and thanks extends to their staffs as well.

To the Chairman, thank you for your leadership during a challenging time both due to the impacts of COVID and because of the evolving nature of the nuclear industry.

The NRC is tackling the regulation of new and emerging reactor and medical technologies, the extension of licenses for the current fleet, and the planned and unplanned decommissioning of facilities, as well as a myriad of other issues, including cyber and physical security. It's a busy time and an important time in our Agency's history.

I'd also like to extend my thanks to the RIC organizers. For those of you who have never attended a RIC, I hope you find the panels informative and helpful. The NRC staff works very hard to organize and put on this conference, which features panel breakout sessions along with a handful of plenary sessions like this one, and many general sessions.

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And finally, I would like to take a moment to say how proud I am to be a part of the NRC team and to say thank you to my team, Team Wright. Thank each of you for the ways that you support me and each other as we do the important work of this Agency.

My family in South Carolina is a big part of my team too, and I especially want to say thank you to them because they totally support me being here at the NRC. I have said this before: while I serve, my family is serving too. And I appreciate their sacrifices and support of my being here.

As was the case last year, this past year has given me reason to reflect on many things, to remember my past, where I came from, and where I am today. As I reflected, I kept coming back to how goals, goal planning, and executing plans to achieve my goals have played a huge role in my life. So my remarks today will focus on that.

I will share a few examples of personal goals that have shaped my life and my approach as Commissioner, and I'll discuss the NRC's goal of transforming as an Agency and my perspectives on how the Agency can best achieve that goal. With both

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professional and personal goals, you always have to factor in change and the unknown.

Certainly, if the last few years has taught us anything, it's that change is inevitable and we must adapt. Take this RIC, for example. As you know, the NRC's goal was to have this year's RIC in person. Omicron changed that. But I have found and will discuss with you this morning some of the ways that changes and challenges in meeting goals can ultimately give greater purpose and help achieve a greater goal in the end.

I actually have a wooden block in my office that says, a goal without a plan is just a wish. It's one of many motivational wooden block signs I have in my Rockville office and in my home in South Carolina. But of all the signs I have, this one speaks to an everyday truth in my life.

Having goals is important, but having a plan to achieve that goal is critical to success. Last year, my personal goal was to find laughter despite the change and chaos that COVID-19 brought. It was actually the subject of my RIC plenary remarks, the power of laughter and the importance of taking time to take care of yourself.

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I encouraged you to get outside and experience what is happening in nature around you. I asked you to take the time to smile and say hello to people you meet each day because that recognition may be the best thing that happens to that person all day, and you can see their smile in their eyes even with a mask on.

I urged you to step away from the computer and the phone and return to and experience the things that make you smile, that make you laugh and make you happy. That's because laughter and taking time for yourself improves you in many ways, from your health to your relationships to your work product. I truly believe that this personal goal has huge impact on one's success at work and focusing on tasks, interacting with colleagues, and being productive and successful.

My goal from last year has not changed. I attribute my goal to find laughter to my dad, who among other abilities was a stand-up comic. And let me tell you there was very little he wouldn't do for a laugh. Bringing laughter to his audience, to his family and friends was his mission.

When I was very young, he had a safari-

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themed television show that ran for nearly a decade, and he would bring all kinds of animals on the show. He would get bit and kicked, even strangled by a python, all for laughs. Don't worry, though. I won't go that far, and I assure you there will be no live animals here with me today.

Another goal that I attribute to my dad led me to public service and ultimately here to the NRC. You see, the television station where Dad filmed his safari show was about two blocks from the South Carolina State House. He took me to be on his show when I was an eight-year-old third grader studying South Carolina history in school.

On the way home, Dad slowed down to show me the State House. It was an impressive structure, and I remember asking him how people got to go to work there. After he explained elections to me, I told him I wanted to serve there one day. That day, a goal of public service was set in my mind. And what my dad said next really resonated with me. He smiled and nodded and told me, anything is possible for you, son, if you want it bad enough.

And I wanted it bad enough. Through planning and executing, I achieved that goal at 30

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years of age. Achieving that goal brought other opportunities into my path, up to and including my current position as an NRC Commissioner. I'm truly honored and blessed to be in this role, and I can assure you that I would not have imagined I could ever be hired to work here, much less lead this great Agency. What an honor.

At the NRC, our main goal is set for us. It's meeting our vital safety mission, reasonable assurance of adequate protection. But there are different ways of planning and executing that goal, and there have been many changes and hardships, especially in the last several years.

Through all of the change and hardships, though, I'm encouraged by what I've seen accomplished at the NRC. Together, through unity of purpose and resolve, the NRC staff has shown that we can still achieve our mission. And we have achieved some really good things along the way.

And I'd like to acknowledge the efforts of all our stakeholders, particularly licensees. Their dedication to keeping nuclear facilities running safely in compliance with our regulations was no small task, particularly during COVID. Our

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counterparts around the world also provide incredible help and insights and work closely with us, sharing challenges, successes, and lessons learned on licensing and regulating.

Although reasonable assurance of adequate protection is our main goal, the NRC has other goals as well. One of the top goals of the NRC for the past several years has been transformation. I'll be the first to admit I was initially hesitant about this effort, primarily because I wasn't sure what the goal of transformation was. Was there unity of purpose at the Agency for what success meant or looked like? What was the plan for executing the goal?

As you may have heard me say before, I have always seen transformation as not a huge change in what or how the NRC is doing things; instead, I see it as a recalibration in our regulatory approach and acceptance that the way we have always done something might not be the best or only approach. It's about being ready for what is before us and what we can expect in the future, and ultimately for the NRC not to be a barrier to innovation.

As with any goal, I wanted to understand

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the staff's plan and how they were executing that plan. I've been impressed with much of what I've seen. The staff has been focused on four areas: one, recruiting, developing, and retaining a strong workforce; two, moving towards making more decisions in a risk-informed manner; three, establishing a culture that embraces innovation; and four, adopting new and existing information technology resources.

I'll touch on each of these four areas, with a focus on the last three. We've had to embrace innovation and adopt new and existing technological resources in adapting to the new and changing world and regulatory environment around us in recent years. There are two areas that I think are real success stories when it comes to innovation and use of technology at the NRC.

The first is the Agency's response to COVID. Similar to what happened for all of you and your organizations in the March 2020 time frame, things changed almost overnight for the NRC with the issuance of stay-at-home orders and a move to almost complete telework.

For the NRC, as a safety regulator that is responsible for licensing and inspecting the

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civilian nuclear fleet, this raised a number of unprecedented and difficult challenges and decisions. It created emergent licensing needs, forced us to prioritize inspections to ensure the health and safety of our inspectors and plant personnel. It put us in a virtual environment with each other, our stakeholders, and the public. And it required us to consider our statutory and regulatory requirements to ensure we were meeting them despite the changed circumstances.

To say decisions needed to be made quickly is an understatement. Resident inspectors' presence at plants, requests from licensees for exemptions and amendments, and how to handle the need for secure communications and in-person interactions were just a few of the challenges. We had to transform on the spot. All of our processes and procedures were in question. And we did it. In every area, we recalibrated how we did things, using technology in new ways to address something I doubt anyone could have expected. And we never lost focus of our mission.

I cannot overstate how proud I am of the way NRC planned for and executed the goal of dealing

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with COVID impacts. The other area where I've seen real success at the NRC in executing its transformation goal is staff-led efforts to innovate. A few examples that come to mind are EMBARK Venture Studios, the Be RiskSMART initiative, Nuclepedia, IdeaScale, and the variety of staff-level efforts to streamline our environmental review processes.

It's exciting to see staff at every level of the Agency being energized and encouraged by management to think creatively about new and different ways to achieve our mission. I personally want to thank every staff member and external stakeholder watching or listening, including other federal agencies, domestic and international organizations, and members of the public that have been brave enough to put their idea out there.

I'd like to encourage each individual watching and listening today that has a new, innovative idea to keep those innovative thoughts coming, even if some question you. I recall when the NRC's EMBARK Studios was first introduced, and there were chuckles in the hall: what a silly name. What is this?

This isn't uncommon, though, when there's

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change or new ideas. There's often initial skepticism or some level of discomfort. But, thankfully, the staff kept moving and kept thinking. Now EMBARK Venture Studios is a launching ground for innovative ideas, including initiatives that support Be RiskSMART.

EMBARK Venture Studios is leveraging data and risk information to help inform its licensing review and inspections. This is exactly the type of technological innovation that ensures that we're working in a risk-informed, innovative, and effective way.

The NRC's Jam in 2019 likewise was met with some resistance and questions about what it was and how useful it would be, and it ultimately led to many thoughtful conversations and ideas. I hope that the staff considers another Jam in the near term.

To me, this is success in achieving our transformation goal, but by no means does it mean that every staff-level idea or ideas from external stakeholders are accepted or tried, because they're not. The ideas have to be vetted, and each idea that goes forward must meet our mission. But I love innovative thinking and action without too many

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layers of management -- keeping it simple and not overcomplicating the plan or its execution.

There are other areas where the staff has looked to transform that have been more challenging. One example that comes to mind is the advanced reactor area. As most of you know, there are many state and federal legislative efforts related to supporting or expediting advanced nuclear reactors and technology. There are many vendors and licensees developing a variety of designs and concepts.

There is also considerable focus on whether and when an effective regulatory framework will be in place for these technologies. The NRC is at the heart of making that happen, and there are many perspectives, too, both internal and from external stakeholders, on our plan and execution of meeting the goal of transforming our regulatory framework to support advanced nuclear technologies.

One of the NRC's many efforts in this area is developing a rule required by the Nuclear Energy Innovation and Modernization Act, or NEIMA. This is referred to as the Part 53 Rule, and many of you listening have been actively watching or engaging with the NRC on this effort.

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I appreciate all of the input and conversations on this important effort, and I'm excited that the Commission has directed and the staff is proceeding on a schedule that would have this rule ready well before the required deadline in NEIMA. However, recently, the NRC has had growing criticism on its approach, with multiple stakeholders submitting extensive comments suggesting that there are some challenges that need to be addressed.

First, I appreciate the staff's work and the extensive outreach done. And make no mistake: there has been transformative thinking and approaches in developing Part 53 thus far, including early release of draft rule language for discussion and consideration of the Commission's Advanced Reactor Policy Statement.

I also appreciate the detailed feedback from stakeholders, in particular feedback pointing out particular technical areas where more clarity from the NRC is needed or would be helpful. Overall, I would say the feedback we are hearing on Part 53 is that the timing of the rule isn't as important as the rule being useful and usable. Of course, that's easier said than done when you're talking about a

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rule that's supposed to cover a broad spectrum of technologies.

But I encourage staff to push forward, think creatively, and recognize that not only are we not constrained by how we've done things in the past; perhaps we should approach things differently because these are, after all, different designs than our current fleet. As we all know, what made sense for a large light-water reactor may not make sense for a microreactor.

Let me make an observation. What we are being asked to do and tasked with accomplishing requires us to be transformative and innovative. We may be an independent safety regulator and our safety mission is clear, but we must remain externally aware regarding the goals of other agencies and other branches of government.

The goals of Congress, the Department of Energy, and the NRC are all connected, and our preparation to evaluate new technologies will ultimately enable the safe use of these new technologies. Again, although our mission is clear, the NRC should not be a barrier in achieving this common goal.

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For example, our Congressional oversight committees often reach out to us to ask if we need anything to support our mission generally or in a particular area, like licensing advanced reactors and technologies. We should not be afraid to provide feedback and have frank discussions. If we need more resources or are having challenges, we should say so. This does not indicate that we are failing. It indicates that we are aware of the issues and are searching a path to reach our goal.

Their questions are asked so that they can better understand what is happening, how we are progressing to our goals and meeting our mission, and, in the end, what it is that they can do in support of our shared goals.

Let's also not forget that we are in the proposed rule stage of Part 53. So let's not let perfection be the enemy of progress. We need to get the proposed rule out, let stakeholders comment, and go on from there. Let's not lose focus or overcomplicate things. We need to leverage the lessons learned from our experience with Part 52, where we were trying to simplify things with a one-step process.

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Our best intentions notwithstanding, in my view, we created something far more complex and difficult to understand than the two-step Part 50 process, the process many of these new technology innovators are using right now while part 53 is being developed. We cannot do the same thing in developing Part 53 that happened with Part 52. The NRC cannot be a barrier to new technologies.

That is my challenge, and I know the NRC staff can meet it. Then, once we achieve that goal, we will need to face the challenge of being ready for the possibility of multiple applications from one or multiple utilities or other entities. We must have a plan to execute for that as well.

Another challenge in meeting our transformation goals has been rhetoric about our efforts being intended to remove needed requirements or roll back safety. Some areas in particular where we've received that feedback are the decommissioning rule, recommendations related to the reactor oversight process, and our response to COVID-19.

With respect to decommissioning, for example, there are claims that the decommissioning rule does not appropriately account for risk or

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involve the public. With respect to reactor oversight, there are claims that the staff's previous recommendations would remove necessary inspections. Likewise, there have been concerns raised about our approach to licensing and inspection during COVID-19.

For the record, I'd like to say that in my time and experience at the NRC, at no time have I felt that the staff put forward a recommendation that would remove needed requirements or did not provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection. Our staff are highly trained professionals with integrity and a focus on our safety mission.

Our staff doesn't always agree with how to meet our mission or what the appropriate response should be, nor would it be reasonable to expect them to do so. Professional judgments can and should differ. It's only healthy for those types of disagreements to be present and inclusive in learning organizations.

However, when there are disagreements, the staff always presents its basis for the approach. The staff also typically does a great job responding to stakeholder feedback on why and how we are doing

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things, though there's always room for improvement in that area, as communication issues can and do arise.

But I also need to take a moment and thank the staff. Thank you for considering operating experience, data, inspection findings, your professional judgment, risk information, public input, and stakeholder feedback to come up with new approaches and ways of meeting our mission. Don't be dissuaded by some voices out there. Avoid the noise and simply keep on doing the good work you're doing, and make sure you're telling your story so that it's not told for you.

In conclusion, I'm proud of the NRC for setting a goal to transform and become a more modern and risk-informed regulator. That's not a one-and-done thing, either. It's a goal to change our behavior, our culture, and our processes in a way that doesn't change our ability to meet our mission.

It's also the goal of achieving our mission in a more effective and efficient way that accounts for advances in technology and ensures that we are ready for any and all applications currently under review or coming. In both planning and executing that goal, we face setbacks and we have

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challenges.

There are those that say transformation is wrong or an attempt to cut needed requirements. And some that support it claim that we're not doing enough and are not ready for advanced reactor concepts, fuels, technologies, and are stuck in using our old deterministic ways.

I encourage staff to take that feedback, adjust your plan accordingly, and execute. That might mean starting over in a particular area instead of continuing down a path that isn't working. In the end, starting with a clean sheet of paper can be more efficient than trying to rewrite something. And be ready for the next challenge and the next goal, which is being ready for what will happen after we license our first advanced reactor technology.

Are we ready for the possibility of multiple, possibly dozens, of applications coming in at once? I believe that we can be. And if we aren't, we need to make that clear and develop a plan for what we'll need to do in order to be ready.

I would argue that in many ways, we have experience with licensing and advanced reactor technology. We did so with SHINE, which has,

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essentially, several modular reactors and a production facility designed to produce moly-99 using low enriched uranium. And we had to be ready for other applications with different designs and concepts to do the same. In those instances, we leveraged existing regulation and processes and developed guidance to effectively and efficiently license advanced and novel technology.

I'm here to challenge both the NRC staff and stakeholders to continue to voice your opinions and ask the tough questions and respond to the challenges because it's through these conversations and inclusive dialogues that the NRC can fine-tune its approach and plan.

In my view, success is not unanimity. That's a false hope and expectation. We aren't typically going to have 100 percent agreement on anything, either internally or from our stakeholders. But we must, as a learning organization, hear and be responsive to feedback from our stakeholders, from the public, licensees, and the Congress on what concerns them.

It helps feed into our process and broadens our perspective on how we can achieve our

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mission in the most transparent, effective, and efficient way possible, because I assure everyone -- the NRC, the licensees, the public, Congress, federal partners, and the international community -- everyone. Everyone wants and needs the NRC to meet our safety mission, and we must be ready. We cannot be a barrier.

The beauty of goal planning is that the plan doesn't have to be big or complex. The NRC and the government in general get a bad rap for exactly this: overcomplicating or adding too much process to achieve a goal. But there is some truth to the criticism too.

In my opinion, a successful plan even to a complex problem can be very simple. In fact, I prefer plans that are simple because of their clarity. Simple doesn't mean easy, though, nor does it guarantee success. The plan may not end up taking you where you thought it would take you. But a simple plan makes it easy to focus on what you need to do to accomplish your goal, including walking away from that plan if it's not working.

Let me end with a personal story about a goal that I had in high school that still drives me

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and drives the way I think today. It's also something that I think applies to innovators, both those inside the NRC thinking of new approaches, and applicants and licensees looking to adopt or create new technologies.

When I was a junior in high school, I wanted to play on the varsity basketball team. I had pretty good ball skill. I was quick, I could defend, and I had a decent shot. I worked out regularly, I ran a lot, and I never missed an opportunity to practice. But I had a problem. I was very short and small.

I was by far the shortest and smallest guy trying out. But I worked hard, and I got to the last day of tryouts. And, well, I was the very last guy cut from the basketball team. That by itself hurt a lot, but things got even worse when a coach for both the football and the basketball team told me that I was too small to be a good athlete.

I was devastated. I went home, and my mom was there waiting when I walked in. It's like she knew something. After I told her what had happened, she looked at me and asked, so, David, what are you going to do about it? What can I do about

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it, Mom? I ask.

Well, you can give up and quit trying, or you can prove them wrong. I know you're upset about not making the team, David, but there's nothing wrong with you. And I can promise you this: this will not be the only time in your life you're going to face adversity. So what are you going to do about it, son?

Well, after a period, my mind cleared, and I knew she was right. I had a goal of representing and competing for my high school. That's what I really wanted to do. But basketball wasn't the only sport at my high school. So, since basketball was out, now what?

In her own way, Mom reminded me that my goal of representing and competing for my high school was still very much alive. I just had to address the plan and hopefully successfully execute the plan. I decided to ask the track coach if he'd let me try out for track, although I'd missed initial track sign-ups and workouts in order to try out for basketball.

The coach allowed me to start coming to practice, and I quickly realized that all the working out, running, and training I'd done for basketball

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might help me in certain events on the track. So I decided to look at the distance team, the two-mile run primarily, along with the mile and the half-mile.

I trained every day, learning how to prepare for and run the different races. When I finally got to compete, believe it or not, was in the conference championships at the end of the season in the final of the two-mile run. And I found myself immediately near the back of the 24 runners when the race started, but I didn't quit.

As the race continued, I found myself coming up on other runners. So I started passing them, including one of my teammates about a mile in. About a mile and a half into the race, I realized where I was: not too far behind the leaders. And I almost panicked. I'd never been in that position before. It was uncharted territory for me, and I was not sure what to do. So I just kept going.

I crossed the finish line and finished third overall, medaling in the conference final in my first official race for my high school. I went on to represent and compete for my high school in my senior year, helping my cross-country and track teams win some awards and titles. I even won a couple

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myself.

I even went on to run for the Clemson cross-country and track team in college, earning three varsity letters in cross-country during my time there. Go Tigers.

What the experience of being cut from the basketball team and the challenge from my mom did for me changed my life. And it wasn't about sports; it was about an attitude. What are you going to do about it, David? My mom's direct question to me is one I hear in my head any time I face adversity or failure. Do I give up and quit trying to do something, or do I use adversity as motivation to set a simple goal, develop a plan, and execute the plan?

The success of that plan in my first high school track season set me on a path that not only affected my running goals for years going forward, but what I learned from that experience I've been able to apply to every aspect of my life even today.

The past can be a teacher. So I encourage you to learn from your past near misses. That way, you likely won't repeat them, and more likely, you will grow stronger and better through them. Don't be afraid to take risk just because

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you're afraid to risk failure. Embrace opportunities to achieve.

I've seen so many examples of this at the NRC in my time here. So keep setting goals. Keep striving, and don't take no as never. Take no as motivation to find a different way to meet your goal. Some goals may appear easier to attain than others, but success in any of them requires a plan, an executable plan, because overcomplicating things can make things unworkable.

The NRC must be ready not just for what is before us now but also for what will happen next. And if we aren't ready, what are we going to do about it? For me, it's critical that the NRC continue to strive to do the things we do in a more educated, risk-informed, and data-driven way. This includes our licensing and oversight, but it also includes our focus on our most important asset: our people.

As I mentioned, the first transformation focus area is recruiting, developing, and retaining a strong workforce. It should come as no surprise that this is the first focus area, either, as our workforce is instrumental in achieving our goals.

The NRC is only as strong as its people,

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and the NRC has been leveraging its strategic workforce planning process, which it repeats annually, to continually improve workforce development and readiness and knowledge management.

In this process, the NRC does an environmental scan that projects the amount and type of work anticipated in the next five years and identifies the workforce needs in order to perform that work. By analyzing the current workforce and comparing it to future needs, the Agency can successfully identify skill gaps.

The NRC then develops both short- and long-term strategies to enable the Agency to recruit, retain, and develop a skilled and diverse workforce with the competencies and agility to address both current and emerging needs and workload fluctuations. This helps us reach our goal of having the skills we'll need to perform the work that we expect.

And the people that we have and the people that join our Agency, whether for rotation and internship or as a permanent hire, can and should look at risk-informed ways to simplify our processes. That should be our goal every day because the future is going to require us to be aware, nimble, adaptive,

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and responsive to the new frontier before us.

I'd like to end by saying that myself and each member of my team are only a phone call or an email away. Don't hesitate to reach out if there is an issue that you'd like to discuss. Take care, and all the best in setting and accomplishing your goals in 2022 and beyond. And I hope to see you in person soon. Thank you.

MS. VEIL: Thank you so much for your comprehensive remarks, Commissioner Wright, and the personal stories and the related analogies as well. Now we can turn to questions.

(Off-microphone comments when microphone was not working: Good morning, Andrea. It's good to see you. Thank you for your introduction, and for your leadership of NRR. And thanks for reminding me that March is also Colon Cancer Awareness Month, so please get screened.)

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Mic's not working. And if I could, before we get to questions, if I might just for a second, I'd like to just touch on a couple of items.

For the last several weeks, like all of you, I've been consumed by the coverage surrounding

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the situation in Ukraine as the Russian Federation has willingly violated Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, and now they have attacked and occupied several nuclear facilities.

There's no shortage of amazing courage, from President Zelensky to the people of Ukraine to our regulatory counterparts in Ukraine and the IAEA and the international community, to the operational staff at the Ukrainian facilities that are occupied.

I join Commissioner Baran and Chairman Hanson in their solidarity with Ukraine and with our regulatory counterparts over there -- and to quote the Chairman, I think this morning he said as they work to protect and sustain and, if needed, restore the safe and secure operation of their nuclear facilities. So it's very important.

And you might have noticed today we had a little graphic help with pictures, and I want to just thank the AV team here at the NRC. They're amazing to work with. So we had Tyrus Wheeler, who's the contract representative here, and Leon Montgomery. He is very good. Awesome. Kevin McCormick, great job on the camera, as usual. And

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(audio interference) their willingness to help me really made it fun, and hopefully others will take advantage of them in the future. And so, with that --

MS. VEIL: Thank you very much for those heartfelt and thoughtful remarks. For your first question, how do we maintain a balance between the use of risk assessment and particularly the PRA and the general public's lack of understanding and interest in risk assessment PRA? Doesn't it make the public involvement in the process more challenging?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you for the question. Well, yes. I mean, in the end, though, it's the technical staff's job to review and apply risk insights where appropriate. But it's really important that we communicate, too, because I do agree that the public doesn't understand some things.

But we should leverage data and risk insights in making our decisions. So I agree with the premise of the question, and that's the answer I'm going to give you right now.

MS. VEIL: Okay. Next question. What do you consider the biggest challenge or challenges for the Agency to overcome to be ready for advanced

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reactors and other new technologies?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, you mean as in roadblocks or what?

MS. VEIL: Yes.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: I think we've got to be open on everything here. Would you just quickly repeat the first part of that question?

MS. VEIL: Sure. Hold on one second. Okay. What do you consider the biggest challenge or challenges for the Agency to overcome to be ready for advanced reactors and other new technologies?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, again, I think it goes back to workforce too. There's a number of ways to answer that question, but strategic workforce planning has been something we've been at and after. And if we don't have the technical expertise to review what we're doing, I think that's important. We have to address that.

Right now, I don't see that that's a problem. And then, again, I think with different technologies that are out there, whoever they are -- because there's many, I'm sure, that haven't even -- we don't even know about. But early engagement and all that stuff is important because the staff is going

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to be learning as well, and it would make the process a lot easier in the end, in the long term.

So it comes down to we've got to have the right people --

MS. VEIL: Okay.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: -- and the right information coming in too.

MS. VEIL: All right. Next question. How does the Commission maintain a strong safety culture within the regulatory framework?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: How do they --

MS. VEIL: How does the Commission maintain a strong safety culture within the regulatory framework?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, one, we have to be open. We have to communicate. We have to talk with each other. If we see something, say something. All right? If there's a concern, we should not be afraid to bring it up and to talk it through.

And I think that that applies Agency-wide no matter what we're doing, right? I mean, it applies on the materials side of things. It applies on the reactor side of things. It applies on the Human Resources side of things. It applies on the

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Commission communication level of things.

So, again, I don't want to go beyond our mission. I will tell you, reasonable assurance is the floor. Reasonable assurance is the ceiling. It's the whole room. And being a baseball guy, it's also the strike zone over home plate that we have to hit.

MS. VEIL: Okay. Are there any areas where you feel that transformation efforts are inappropriate?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Well, I guess bottom line to answer that question is no. It's important first that we have to define the goal of transformation, define what it is we're trying to do. Like I spoke a few minutes ago to, in my time here, like I said, I thought of it more as recalibration of how we do things, not particularly what we do with everything, because we're focused on meeting our mission.

And I think it should include opportunities to use new and innovative approaches to things because, again, as long as we're meeting our important safety mission -- so those opportunities are everywhere within the Agency. So I think it's

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appropriate everywhere.

MS. VEIL: And we have time for one more question. How do you think NRC is becoming agile enough for new reactor development and deployment in a timely manner at least to replenish the retiring nuclear power plants' installed capacity?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: How to -- again, repeat that.

MS. VEIL: How do you think NRC is becoming agile enough for new nuclear development and deployment in a timely manner at least to replenish the retiring nuclear power plants' installed capacity?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Right. I missed the word agile, didn't understand it. So we need to leverage our own efforts and those of our federal partners, and in the international community as well, in how advanced technology is considered.

We need to think of new and better ways to do things because the way we do it now may not be the only way or even the best way. And the new technology is likely -- they're not going to require the exact same things as our current fleet does.

So we've got to be nimble. We've got to

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be agile and willing and open to tackle those things and to look at new ways of doing things.

MS. VEIL: I want to thank you again, Commissioner Wright, for your thoughtful remarks, and I also want to remind everyone on the platform that there are concurrent technical sessions at 1:00. So don't eat lunch and not come back. Please come back to the platform and take part in all of the sessions that are the concurrent technical sessions.

And with that, I close the session.
Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 11:30 a.m.)