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Assembly California Legislature

JOHN VASCONCELLOS
ASSEMBLYMAN, TWENTY-THIRD DISTRICT

CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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Nunzio Palladino, Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555

Chairman Palladino -

It has been brought to my attention that the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant is now ready to operate, and questions concerning potential safety problems have been raised. Within the past three months the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the intervenors in the licensing proceedings for the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant have received over 100 allegations by plant workers that portray a picture of poor quality control and poor quality assurance, and which indicates management cover-up of these problems.

The NRC has not yet determined the causes within the organization of plant owner PG&E, and now that Diablo Canyon is ready to operate I am concerned that the NRC might authorize operation before a full investigation is conducted. It is crucial that all questions concerning safety be resolved before this plant is licensed to operate.

Given the serious, and well-documented, nature of many of the allegations, and the fact that they relate to issues which were either uncovered or corrected during the course of the two-year-long design verification program (ordered after PG&E lost its license for Diablo Canyon in 1981), I urge the NRC to complete the following steps before authorizing plant operation:

1. The NRC will authorize a complete investigation by its Office of Investigation into the causes of the quality assurance/quality control breakdown at Diablo Canyon, including charges of retaliation against workers who report problems or mistakes, the falsification and destruction of records, and intentional management decisions to violate the Atomic Energy Act.

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2. An independent body will conduct an independent audit of the entire PG&E/Bechtel design review, including a provision for a broad public oversight committee.
3. An independent body will conduct a comprehensive quality control re-inspection of all safety-related hardware in the plant.

The completion of these three steps, and a resolution of the problems they might uncover are necessary to assure safe plant operation. It is important to both the public and the NRC that any question of safety be resolved before plant operation is permitted.

I wish you well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'N' followed by a series of loops and a final upward stroke.