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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1218 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
(202) 225-2721
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FREDERICK
10 EAST CHURCH STREET
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(301) 797-8043
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(301) 987-8131
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P.O. Box 3275
(301) 729-0300
WESTMINSTER
86 EAST MAIN STREET
(301) 848-3386

April 13, 1984

Carlton Kammerer, Director
Office of Congressional Affairs
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 "H" Street
Washington, D. C. 20555

Dear Mr. Kammerer:

Enclosed is a copy of the letter I received from an employee of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, who wishes to remain anonymous, regarding his concern about the possible relocation of employees of N.R.C. from their present Montgomery County offices to a District of Columbia location.

I will very much appreciate your addressing the employees's concerns and supplying me with information for a reply to his numerous questions.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Beverly Byron
Beverly B. Byron
Member of Congress

BBB:cm
Enclosure

4/17..To EDO for Direct Reply..Suspense: April 27..OCA to Ack
84-0420

Please reply to: 10 East Church Street, Frederick, Maryland 21701

8510010122 850904
PDR FOIA
DEZUBE85-564 PDR

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Hon. Beverly Byron
10 East Church Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Rep. Byron,

I am writing this letter as a followup to my telephone call to your office last week during which I expressed great concern about the possible relocation of thousands of employees of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) from their present Montgomery County offices to a downtown District of Columbia location.

The issue of relocation of NRC offices has been a bone of contention between the Commissioners and NRC employees for many years now. Several years ago, with the support of the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) and the Maryland Congressional Delegation (which included Senators Mathias and Sarbanes, and Congressman Barnes), NRC employees demonstrated to Congress the wisdom of consolidating NRC Headquarters office locations in Montgomery County. As a result of this effort as well as a BSA cost-benefit study, Congress authorized the construction of an NRC Headquarters office building in Silver Spring, Maryland. Unfortunately, the funds for actual construction of the building were not appropriated in the succeeding session of Congress due to the new administration's economy moves.

During the hearings on this issue, factors such as (1) higher costs for office space, greater contribution to traffic congestion, (2) increased commuting costs, (3) impacts on employee morale and (4) employees' willingness to work voluntary overtime - weighed heavily against a downtown D.C. location and in favor of a Montgomery County NRC Headquarters location.

Today, these arguments are no less valid, and in some cases they are more so. NRC officials had argued that with the advent of METRO the increased traffic congestion that might be brought about by a downtown D.C. location would not occur. This assumed that most Montgomery County residents employed by NRC would use METRO to get to work. However, recent plans by METRO to charge six or seven dollars for a round trip on METRO - from the Shady Grove station to downtown and return - indicate that most NRC employees would not be able to afford METRO and would still drive their cars to work.

Morale among Federal government workers is now at an all time low as a result

of the multitude of attacks on pay, retirement plans, and health benefits in recent years. The additional costs to NRC employees of increased transportation requirements, longer hours for child care, and fewer hours of leisure time would cause many NRC employees to seek employment elsewhere. This could cause severe impacts on the quality of the NRC work force since it is usually the best and brightest who depart first when other more attractive opportunities arise.

Apart from any arguments for the common good, of course, I have a personal stake in not having to commute to work in downtown D.C. I have five children who all demand and deserve a good deal of attention. In particular, I do not look forward to the prospect of my youngest son, who now attends a Montessori school, spending additional time in the after school day care program each day until I can pick him up in the afternoon. There is even some doubt that I would be able to get home each evening to pick him up by the six P.M. closing time, even if I felt he could tolerate such a long day. Since my wife and I both work, I feel it essential for me to be as close to home as possible in order to respond to the inevitable emergencies of children having accidents, becoming ill, etc. Also, the much higher costs of commuting and at least five additional hours of commuting time per week would persuade me to look for employment elsewhere, even though I much enjoy what I am now doing at NRC. As a matter of fact, in order to avoid the "June rush", I feel it only prudent to begin looking for other opportunities even now.

The arguments for consolidation of NRC Headquarters offices in downtown D.C. are few and unconvincing. They were not sufficient to persuade Congress several years ago when Congress voted to build a new Headquarters building in Silver Spring, and it seems unlikely that these arguments would be any more convincing today.

If this is the case, then why should there be concern today that NRC Headquarters offices would be located in downtown D.C.? Recently, according to NTEU sources, it became known that the downtown offices of the NRC Commissioners, located in the Matomic Building at 17th street, are about to be vacated since GSA is not renewing its lease on the building. This presents the Commissioners with the opportunity to attempt to consolidate all NRC Headquarters offices in whatever new facilities to which the Commissioners will be relocated.

The thought that this may be accomplished, quietly and without public or NRC employee input, in spite of all the evidence presented in hearings and studies that have overwhelmingly convinced Congress to the contrary in the recent past, disgraces and denigrates the democratic process upon which we should all have a right to depend.

What is the purpose of spending all the time and taxpayer funds on hearings, studies and related deliberations to rationally decide a public issue if a few politically connected individuals can thwart the process and work their private will through backdoor machinations? How many times must an issue be decided before it is laid to rest?

Before any decision is made to consolidate NRC offices in downtown D.C., I would hope that the Commissioners would be required to demonstrate that the wisdom of the Congress of just a few years ago has become irrelevant and that some new factors now argue in favor of a downtown location. Unless such a showing is made, a downtown relocation should not be approved. Thus, I am looking to you, Rep. Byron, to take the appropriate steps to assure that any significant NRC office move is made only after a full Congressional inquiry succeeds in refuting the arguments which led to the previous decision to consolidate NRC Headquarters in Silver Spring. Thank you.

Sincerely yours.

