

# **Official Transcript of Proceedings**

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Commissioner Wright Plenary

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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.

Commissioner Wright, we look forward to

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1 your remarks.

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

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

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

23 Before I begin my formal remarks, I'd like  
24 to congratulate my colleagues on their plenary remarks  
25 and publicly acknowledge how much I appreciate their

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1 friendship, their work ethic, and their collegiality.  
2 My appreciation and thanks extends to their staffs as  
3 well.

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

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

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

23 And finally, I would like to take a moment  
24 to say how proud I am to be a part of the NRC team and  
25 to say thank you to my team, Team Wright. Thank each

1 of you for the ways that you support me and each other  
2 as we do the important work of this Agency.

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

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

16 I will share a few examples of personal  
17 goals that have shaped my life and my approach as  
18 Commissioner, and I'll discuss the NRC's goal of  
19 transforming as an Agency and my perspectives on how  
20 the Agency can best achieve that goal. With both  
21 professional and personal goals, you always have to  
22 factor in change and the unknown.

23 Certainly, if the last few years has  
24 taught us anything, it's that change is inevitable and  
25 we must adapt. Take this RIC, for example. As you

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1 know, the NRC's goal was to have this year's RIC in  
2 person. Omicron changed that. But I have found and  
3 will discuss with you this morning some of the ways  
4 that changes and challenges in meeting goals can  
5 ultimately give greater purpose and help achieve a  
6 greater goal in the end.

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

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

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

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1 mask on.

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

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

18 When I was very young, he had a safari-  
19 themed television show that ran for nearly a decade,  
20 and he would bring all kinds of animals on the show.  
21 He would get bit and kicked, even strangled by a  
22 python, all for laughs. Don't worry, though. I won't  
23 go that far, and I assure you there will be no live  
24 animals here with me today.

25 Another goal that I attribute to my dad



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

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

16 And I wanted it bad enough. Through  
17 planning and executing, I achieved that goal at 30  
18 years of age. Achieving that goal brought other  
19 opportunities into my path, up to and including my  
20 current position as an NRC Commissioner. I'm truly  
21 honored and blessed to be in this role, and I can  
22 assure you that I would not have imagined I could ever  
23 be hired to work here, much less lead this great  
24 Agency. What an honor.

25 At the NRC, our main goal is set for us.

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1 It's meeting our vital safety mission, reasonable  
2 assurance of adequate protection. But there are  
3 different ways of planning and executing that goal,  
4 and there have been many changes and hardships,  
5 especially in the last several years.

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

12 And I'd like to acknowledge the efforts of  
13 all our stakeholders, particularly licensees. Their  
14 dedication to keeping nuclear facilities running  
15 safely in compliance with our regulations was no small  
16 task, particularly during COVID. Our counterparts  
17 around the world also provide incredible help and  
18 insights and work closely with us, sharing challenges,  
19 successes, and lessons learned on licensing and  
20 regulating.

21 Although reasonable assurance of adequate  
22 protection is our main goal, the NRC has other goals  
23 as well. One of the top goals of the NRC for the past  
24 several years has been transformation. I'll be the  
25 first to admit I was initially hesitant about this

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1 effort, primarily because I wasn't sure what the goal  
2 of transformation was. Was there unity of purpose at  
3 the Agency for what success meant or looked like?  
4 What was the plan for executing the goal?

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

14 As with any goal, I wanted to understand  
15 the staff's plan and how they were executing that  
16 plan. I've been impressed with much of what I've  
17 seen. The staff has been focused on four areas: one,  
18 recruiting, developing, and retaining a strong  
19 workforce; two, moving towards making more decisions  
20 in a risk-informed manner; three, establishing a  
21 culture that embraces innovation; and four, adopting  
22 new and existing information technology resources.

23 I'll touch on each of these four areas,  
24 with a focus on the last three. We've had to embrace  
25 innovation and adopt new and existing technological

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1 resources in adapting to the new and changing world  
2 and regulatory environment around us in recent years.  
3 There are two areas that I think are real success  
4 stories when it comes to innovation and use of  
5 technology at the NRC.

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

12 For the NRC, as a safety regulator that is  
13 responsible for licensing and inspecting the civilian  
14 nuclear fleet, this raised a number of unprecedented  
15 and difficult challenges and decisions. It created  
16 emergent licensing needs, forced us to prioritize  
17 inspections to ensure the health and safety of our  
18 inspectors and plant personnel. It put us in a  
19 virtual environment with each other, our stakeholders,  
20 and the public. And it required us to consider our  
21 statutory and regulatory requirements to ensure we  
22 were meeting them despite the changed circumstances.

23 To say decisions needed to be made quickly  
24 is an understatement. Resident inspectors' presence  
25 at plants, requests from licensees for exemptions and

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1 amendments, and how to handle the need for secure  
2 communications and in-person interactions were just a  
3 few of the challenges. We had to transform on the  
4 spot. All of our processes and procedures were in  
5 question. And we did it. In every area, we  
6 recalibrated how we did things, using technology in  
7 new ways to address something I doubt anyone could  
8 have expected. And we never lost focus of our  
9 mission.

10 I cannot overstate how proud I am of the  
11 way NRC planned for and executed the goal of dealing  
12 with COVID impacts. The other area where I've seen  
13 real success at the NRC in executing its  
14 transformation goal is staff-led efforts to innovate.  
15 A few examples that come to mind are EMBARK Venture  
16 Studios, the Be RiskSMART initiative, Nuclepedia,  
17 IdeaScale, and the variety of staff-level efforts to  
18 streamline our environmental review processes.

19 It's exciting to see staff at every level  
20 of the Agency being energized and encouraged by  
21 management to think creatively about new and different  
22 ways to achieve our mission. I personally want to  
23 thank every staff member and external stakeholder  
24 watching or listening, including other federal  
25 agencies, domestic and international organizations,

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1 and members of the public that have been brave enough  
2 to put their idea out there.

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

10 This isn't uncommon, though, when there's  
11 change or new ideas. There's often initial skepticism  
12 or some level of discomfort. But, thankfully, the  
13 staff kept moving and kept thinking. Now EMBARK  
14 Venture Studios is a launching ground for innovative  
15 ideas, including initiatives that support Be  
16 RiskSMART.

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

23 The NRC's Jam in 2019 likewise was met  
24 with some resistance and questions about what it was  
25 and how useful it would be, and it ultimately led to

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1 many thoughtful conversations and ideas. I hope that  
2 the staff considers another Jam in the near term.

3 To me, this is success in achieving our  
4 transformation goal, but by no means does it mean that  
5 every staff-level idea or ideas from external  
6 stakeholders are accepted or tried, because they're  
7 not. The ideas have to be vetted, and each idea that  
8 goes forward must meet our mission. But I love  
9 innovative thinking and action without too many layers  
10 of management -- keeping it simple and not  
11 overcomplicating the plan or its execution.

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

20 There is also considerable focus on  
21 whether and when an effective regulatory framework  
22 will be in place for these technologies. The NRC is  
23 at the heart of making that happen, and there are many  
24 perspectives, too, both internal and from external  
25 stakeholders, on our plan and execution of meeting the

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1 goal of transforming our regulatory framework to  
2 support advanced nuclear technologies.

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

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

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

25 I also appreciate the detailed feedback



1 from stakeholders, in particular feedback pointing out  
2 particular technical areas where more clarity from the  
3 NRC is needed or would be helpful. Overall, I would  
4 say the feedback we are hearing on Part 53 is that the  
5 timing of the rule isn't as important as the rule  
6 being useful and usable. Of course, that's easier  
7 said than done when you're talking about a rule that's  
8 supposed to cover a broad spectrum of technologies.

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

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

24 The goals of Congress, the Department of  
25 Energy, and the NRC are all connected, and our

1 preparation to evaluate new technologies will  
2 ultimately enable the safe use of these new  
3 technologies. Again, although our mission is clear,  
4 the NRC should not be a barrier in achieving this  
5 common goal.

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

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

21 Let's also not forget that we are in the  
22 proposed rule stage of Part 53. So let's not let  
23 perfection be the enemy of progress. We need to get  
24 the proposed rule out, let stakeholders comment, and  
25 go on from there. Let's not lose focus or

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1 overcomplicate things. We need to leverage the  
2 lessons learned from our experience with Part 52,  
3 where we were trying to simplify things with a one-  
4 step process.

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

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

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

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1           With respect to decommissioning, for  
2           example, there are claims that the decommissioning  
3           rule does not appropriately account for risk or  
4           involve the public.     With respect to reactor  
5           oversight, there are claims that the staff's previous  
6           recommendations would remove necessary inspections.  
7           Likewise, there have been concerns raised about our  
8           approach to licensing and inspection during COVID-19.

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

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

23          However, when there are disagreements, the  
24          staff always presents its basis for the approach.   The  
25          staff also typically does a great job responding to

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1 stakeholder feedback on why and how we are doing  
2 things, though there's always room for improvement in  
3 that area, as communication issues can and do arise.

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

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

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

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1 challenges.

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

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

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

22           I would argue that in many ways, we have  
23 experience with licensing and advanced reactor  
24 technology. We did so with SHINE, which has,  
25 essentially, several modular reactors and a production

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1 facility designed to produce moly-99 using low  
2 enriched uranium. And we had to be ready for other  
3 applications with different designs and concepts to do  
4 the same. In those instances, we leveraged existing  
5 regulation and processes and developed guidance to  
6 effectively and efficiently license advanced and novel  
7 technology.

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

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

22 It helps feed into our process and  
23 broadens our perspective on how we can achieve our  
24 mission in the most transparent, effective, and  
25 efficient way possible, because I assure everyone --

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1 the NRC, the licensees, the public, Congress, federal  
2 partners, and the international community -- everyone.  
3 Everyone wants and needs the NRC to meet our safety  
4 mission, and we must be ready. We cannot be a  
5 barrier.

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

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

21 Let me end with a personal story about a  
22 goal that I had in high school that still drives me  
23 and drives the way I think today. It's also something  
24 that I think applies to innovators, both those inside  
25 the NRC thinking of new approaches, and applicants and

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1 licensees looking to adopt or create new technologies.

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

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

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

22 Well, you can give up and quit trying, or  
23 you can prove them wrong. I know you're upset about  
24 not making the team, David, but there's nothing wrong  
25 with you. And I can promise you this: this will not

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1 be the only time in your life you're going to face  
2 adversity. So what are you going to do about it, son?

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

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

16 The coach allowed me to start coming to  
17 practice, and I quickly realized that all the working  
18 out, running, and training I'd done for basketball  
19 might help me in certain events on the track. So I  
20 decided to look at the distance team, the two-mile run  
21 primarily, along with the mile and the half-mile.

22 I trained every day, learning how to  
23 prepare for and run the different races. When I  
24 finally got to compete, believe it or not, was in the  
25 conference championships at the end of the season in

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1 the final of the two-mile run. And I found myself  
2 immediately near the back of the 24 runners when the  
3 race started, but I didn't quit.

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

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

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

22 What the experience of being cut from the  
23 basketball team and the challenge from my mom did for  
24 me changed my life. And it wasn't about sports; it  
25 was about an attitude. What are you going to do about

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1 it, David? My mom's direct question to me is one I  
2 hear in my head any time I face adversity or failure.  
3 Do I give up and quit trying to do something, or do I  
4 use adversity as motivation to set a simple goal,  
5 develop a plan, and execute the plan?

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

11 The past can be a teacher. So I encourage  
12 you to learn from your past near misses. That way,  
13 you likely won't repeat them, and more likely, you  
14 will grow stronger and better through them. Don't be  
15 afraid to take risk just because you're afraid to risk  
16 failure. Embrace opportunities to achieve.

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

25 The NRC must be ready not just for what is

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

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

13 The NRC is only as strong as its people,  
14 and the NRC has been leveraging its strategic  
15 workforce planning process, which it repeats annually,  
16 to continually improve workforce development and  
17 readiness and knowledge management.

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

25 The NRC then develops both short- and

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

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

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

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

25 (Off-microphone comments when microphone

1 was not working: Good morning, Andrea. It's good to  
2 see you. Thank you for your introduction, and for  
3 your leadership of NRR. And thanks for reminding me  
4 that March is also Colon Cancer Awareness Month, so  
5 please get screened.)

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

10 For the last several weeks, like all of  
11 you, I've been consumed by the coverage surrounding  
12 the situation in Ukraine as the Russian Federation has  
13 willingly violated Ukraine's sovereignty,  
14 independence, and territorial integrity, and now they  
15 have attacked and occupied several nuclear facilities.

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

21 I join Commissioner Baran and Chairman  
22 Hanson in their solidarity with Ukraine and with our  
23 regulatory counterparts over there -- and to quote the  
24 Chairman, I think this morning he said as they work to  
25 protect and sustain and, if needed, restore the safe

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1 and secure operation of their nuclear facilities. So  
2 it's very important.

3 And you might have noticed today we had a  
4 little graphic help with pictures, and I want to just  
5 thank the AV team here at the NRC. They're amazing to  
6 work with. So we had Tyrus Wheeler, who's the  
7 contract representative here, and Leon Montgomery. He  
8 is very good. Awesome. Kevin McCormick, great job on  
9 the camera, as usual. And (audio interference) their  
10 willingness to help me really made it fun, and  
11 hopefully others will take advantage of them in the  
12 future. And so, with that --

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

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

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

5 MS. VEIL: Okay. Next question. What do  
6 you consider the biggest challenge or challenges for  
7 the Agency to overcome to be ready for advanced  
8 reactors and other new technologies?

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

11 MS. VEIL: Yes.

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

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

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

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1 Right now, I don't see that that's a  
2 problem. And then, again, I think with different  
3 technologies that are out there, whoever they are --  
4 because there's many, I'm sure, that haven't even --  
5 we don't even know about. But early engagement and  
6 all that stuff is important because the staff is going  
7 to be learning as well, and it would make the process  
8 a lot easier in the end, in the long term.

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

11 MS. VEIL: Okay.

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

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

17 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: How do they --

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

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

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1           And I think that that applies Agency-wide  
2           no matter what we're doing, right? I mean, it applies  
3           on the materials side of things. It applies on the  
4           reactor side of things. It applies on the Human  
5           Resources side of things. It applies on the  
6           Commission communication level of things.

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

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

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

24          And I think it should include  
25          opportunities to use new and innovative approaches to

1 things because, again, as long as we're meeting our  
2 important safety mission -- so those opportunities are  
3 everywhere within the Agency. So I think it's  
4 appropriate everywhere.

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

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

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

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

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

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1                   So we've got to be nimble. We've got to  
2                   be agile and willing and open to tackle those things  
3                   and to look at new ways of doing things.

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

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

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

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