

March 7th, 2012

Delivered on Behalf of Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Peter Visclosky

"Good morning. Chairman Jaczko, thank you for taking the time today to discuss the FY 2013 NRC budget request. Dr. Lyons, it is good to see you again.

"As you all know, I have long advocated for a comprehensive energy policy for our nation and believe that our current, ad-hoc, policy continues to imperil our economy, our national security, and our environment. I also firmly believe that in any conceivable and practical scenario, nuclear should be considered as part of the nation's energy mix for decades to come.

"I am convinced that the commercial nuclear energy sector in the U.S. is safe and effective. That being said, we must ensure that the lessons learned from last year's tragedy at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility are heeded and we enhance the safety and emergency protocols at America's nuclear reactors. The policies of both the NRC and the Office of Nuclear Energy play a pivotal role in ensuring our nation has appropriate regulatory controls in place, while simultaneously pursuing a research and development program to strengthen the nuclear industry. We also should ensure that our domestic manufacturing base has the fullest opportunity to provide for the stability and growth of our nuclear industry.

"As we continue to examine the role the nuclear industry should play in the nation's energy mix, we must find a solution to the final disposition of nuclear waste. The Administration's termination of Yucca has only exacerbated the level of uncertainty when it comes to this issue. Dr. Lyons, the Office of Nuclear Energy is tasked with executing the Department's responsibility under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act and would be charged with furthering any recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission that we collectively decide to pursue as a nation. To be clear, I see the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission as a supplement, not an alternative, to Yucca. However, recognizing that there are actions that need to be taken regardless of the outcome of the debate and ongoing court cases on Yucca Mountain, I am interested in hearing more about the Department's plans in this regard.

"Chairman Jaczko, the NRC has historically been seen as a technical regulator above the fray of politics. I fear that this reputation has been tarnished and believe that you have some work to do to regain the confidence of many on this Subcommittee and in Congress. I look forward to an update of your activities in this regard, as well a dialogue of what you believe we should do in the U.S. to implement the lessons imparted from the disastrous events in Japan.

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time."

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