

Prepared Statement of Dr. Allison Macfarlane
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

June 13, 2012

Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Inhofe and members of the Committee.

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Obama's nominee for the position of member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Before continuing I want to thank my husband, Hugh Gusterson, and my children, Graham and Sascha, who are here with me, for their unwavering support and encouragement.

I am also pleased to be at the table today with Commissioner Kristine Svinicki. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Commissioner Svinicki and Commissioners Apostolakis, Magwood and Ostendorff. They are all talented individuals engaged in the high calling of public service, and I look forward to forging a collegial relationship with them, if confirmed.

Over the last week and a half, I have had the opportunity to meet some of the talented staff at the NRC, who have provided me with a number of briefings on some of the important issues before the NRC. While I was aware of the staff's reputation, these briefings have reinforced my observations about both the quality of the NRC staff and their level of commitment to the mission of the Commission. That mission boils down to a simple concept – protecting the safety of the American people and the environment.

The NRC's main mission is to protect public health and safety, promote the common defense and security and protect the environment. My background has prepared me for all of these mission areas.

My background is as a scientist and public policy scholar. We are trained to be objective, analytical, and to treat our peers as equals. I note that academics over the years have made important contributions to nuclear safety. Among those are former Chairs Shirley Jackson, Nils Diaz and Dale Klein, and now Commissioner Apostolakis, with whom I share an MIT connection.

I earned a doctorate in geology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1992. Geology, as you are aware, plays an important role in the safety of a variety of nuclear facilities. Recent history in Japan has reminded us of the relevance of geology to reactor safety. I have worked at both public and private institutions including Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Georgia Tech, and George Mason. I have contributed to nuclear policy debates since 1996, and have served on National Academy of Science panels reviewing nuclear energy programs and nuclear weapons issues. Most recently I was honored to serve on the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on nuclear waste, another area where my primary background had a role.

I make this commitment to you today: If confirmed, I will devote all my energies to serving on the NRC with the attributes that I consider important to good governance – openness, efficiency and transparency. I will make a strong commitment to collegiality at all levels. An agency endowed with the public trust such as the NRC requires a respectful working environment to assure its integrity.

I am absolutely committed to working with all interests – industry, the public, government agencies, and especially members of Congress. I will solicit a wide range of opinions, ask questions, examine the facts objectively, and reach decisions based on those facts. And I will work to ensure that the NRC remains the global standard among regulatory agencies and continues to be a top-ranked workplace for its employees.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer your questions.

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