

OPENING STATEMENT
BY ALLISON M. MACFARLANE, CHAIRMAN
UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
TO THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
May 23, 2013

Chairman Boxer, Ranking Member Vitter, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Sessions, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored that the President has nominated me to continue my service on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. I also want to thank my family for their constant support and for being here with me this morning.

Last June, I committed to you that I would foster a collegial, productive working environment at the NRC. The NRC faced challenges, and I committed to meet them. From the first day, I made it my practice to meet regularly with my fellow Commissioners to hear and understand their views and establish collegial relationships with each of them. I value their expertise and perspectives. I believe we have alleviated these challenges and are now focused on our important safety and security mission.

I have been privileged to get to know the NRC staff and have benefitted greatly from their guidance. I have visited each of the NRC's four Regional Offices, our Technical Training Center in Tennessee, and a number of our licensed facilities, including the Diablo Canyon, Indian Point, and the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station reactors. I will travel to the Vogtle construction site in early June. I have been impressed by our Resident Inspectors and the talented men and women at the NRC who are dedicated to ensuring that our licensed facilities operate at a consistently high level of safety, that nuclear materials are protected from those with malicious intent, and that the public has confidence in our work.

During my tenure, the NRC staff has continued its excellent work. Our most recent plant performance data demonstrates that the majority of plants are performing well. We continue to implement post-Fukushima safety enhancements to further protect our licensed facilities against severe accidents. The staff is working to address Waste Confidence in a timely and comprehensive manner. The NRC remains committed to ensuring that the safe construction of new facilities occurs without undue delays. When our staff identified potential problems at the Vogtle and Summer plants, the NRC expedited its comprehensive review of license amendments addressing these issues to enable the sites to safely move forward with construction. I have also ensured that we are prepared to process new reactor license applications, including those for small modular reactor technology.

Under my leadership, the NRC has navigated a number of internal challenges. I am proud that our agency has been able to address sequestration without furloughs. I am also managing extensive succession planning among the NRC's senior management, including the replacement of our retiring Executive Director for Operations. Further, I have ensured that the NRC is taking the necessary steps to reduce its office space footprint and make more efficient use of our space, in close cooperation with the General Services Administration. Finally, I have been a strong proponent of effective engagement with the public and "plain language" communication.

I have also assumed several important international leadership roles in activities that directly benefit the NRC's domestic mission. I led the U.S. Delegation to a major nuclear safety conference in Japan late last year. In January, I became Chair of the Multinational Design Evaluation Program (MDEP), a collaborative international program that focuses on new reactor designs and will give important input to our own construction oversight.

If confirmed, I will remain committed to openness, transparency, and efficiency in the NRC's processes. I will continue to seek views from a broad range of parties affected by our work and ensure that those views inform the agency's actions. I will oversee timely

implementation of continued post-Fukushima safety enhancements, while ensuring that this work does not distract the staff from other important safety and security priorities. I will endeavor to more fully integrate our consideration of the entire fuel cycle. I will also work to ensure that the starting point for all agency decisions is rigorous scientific analysis.

I have been honored to serve as Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the past ten months. The NRC has accomplished a tremendous amount in that short time, and my leadership has promoted the openness and collegiality necessary for us to focus on our priorities. There are a number of challenges ahead, but I believe we are on a good course. If confirmed, I enthusiastically look forward to continuing to lead the talented staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission through what promises to be a dynamic and rewarding five years. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today, and I would be pleased to answer your questions.