U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Hearing: Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget
Opening Statement
Commissioner Annie Caputo
April 19, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Carper, Ranking Member Capito, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to come before you today.

This Committee has demonstrated strong bipartisan support for advanced reactors, and a sense of urgency driven by both climate change and energy security concerns.

NRC's role as gatekeeper to the future of advanced reactors is a role that we must get right. While the primacy of our mission to protect public safety and security, and the environment is indisputable, we must find ways to innovate how we will regulate advanced reactors to allow safe nuclear energy deployment on a scale warranted by our national and global clean energy needs.

Congress directed the NRC to develop a new regulatory framework for advanced reactors. The proposed rule under consideration by the Commission is a complex, 1200-page undertaking. This will require considerable work on the part of the Commission, and our staffs, to meet Congress's intent with a sense of urgency. I pledge to work with my colleagues to shape a framework that is simpler, reflecting the inherent safety found in advanced designs, and enabling predictable, efficient reviews.

Our Principles of Good Regulation state that "The American taxpayer, the rate-paying consumer, and licensees are all entitled to the best possible management and administration of our regulatory activities."

At the end of fiscal year 2022, the agency had a carryover balance of $92 million dollars. This means the agency collected roughly $58 million dollars from licensees and $34 million from taxpayers that it did not need to fulfill its mission last year.

I share this Committee's concern that the agency be adequately resourced and staffed to meet our mission. However, my longstanding view remains that the agency needs to improve the financial stewardship of its resources and the fairness of the fees billed to licensees and applicants.