

**Statement of Commissioner Jeff Baran
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
March 4, 2015**

Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Feinstein, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today before the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to be here with my colleagues to discuss NRC's fiscal year 2016 budget request and the work of the Commission.

First and foremost, NRC is focused on our mission of protecting public health and safety. Yet the agency faces a different environment than what was expected just a few years ago when substantial new reactor construction was anticipated and no licensees had yet announced plans to shut down any reactors. To meet our responsibilities now and in the future, we need to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and agility of the agency. In order to avoid disrupting the agency's work, it is important to set a thoughtful trajectory to the appropriate resource and staffing levels over the next few years. We need to make sure that we do a good job matching resources to expected workload.

Before I joined the Commission, my colleagues had the foresight to initiate Project Aim, an internal working group tasked with looking at the changes NRC should make to prepare for the future. This is a valuable and timely effort. The results of the team's work were recently submitted to the Commission and we are actively deliberating on their recommendations.

While we work to increase the agency's efficiency and agility, we need to ensure that NRC also maintains its focus on its ongoing safety work.

Currently, five new reactors are being built in the U.S. and five reactors recently ceased operations and are entering decommissioning. At the construction sites, NRC is conducting oversight to ensure that the new plants are built safely and in accordance with regulatory requirements. For the decommissioning plants, the agency reviews requests for exemptions from some of the requirements that apply to operating plants. Meanwhile, the NRC staff is beginning a rulemaking to take a fresh look at a number of decommissioning issues.

NRC is continuing to address post-Fukushima safety enhancements and lessons learned. Progress has been made in several areas, but we recognize that more work remains to be done.

NRC also is responsible for having an efficient and effective licensing process for new designs and facilities. While NRC continues its work on pending applications for new reactors, we need to be ready to accept and review applications submitted for new technologies. We are expecting to receive the first application for a small modular reactor in 2016. NRC already is reviewing an application for a new production facility for medical isotopes and anticipates additional applications of this type in the future.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.