

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

+ + + + +

27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL REGULATORY INFORMATION CONFERENCE

+ + + + +

COMMISSIONER SVINICKI PLENARY

+ + + + +

TUESDAY

MARCH 10, 2015

+ + + + +

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

+ + + + +

The Plenary Session with Commissioner Svinicki during the Regulatory Information Conference began at 10:30 a.m. at the Bethesda Marriott Hotel & Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road, Rockville, Maryland.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

## P R O C E E D I N G S

10:31 a.m.

1  
2  
3 MR. DEAN: Okay. Welcome back everybody.  
4 Good to have everybody back. It looks like we got at  
5 least 95 percent of the people to come back.

6 It's with great pleasure I have the  
7 opportunity now to introduce Commissioner Svinicki.  
8 Commissioner Svinicki was sworn in for a second term  
9 as a Commissioner of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory  
10 Commission on June 29, 2012. Her first term began in  
11 March 2008.

12 She came to the Commission from a position  
13 on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee,  
14 where she worked on issues such as nuclear defense  
15 programs, nuclear security and environmental  
16 management. Prior to her work in the Senate,  
17 Commissioner Svinicki worked as a nuclear engineer in  
18 various positions with the U.S. Department of Energy,  
19 both in Washington, D.C. and in Idaho.

20 Before that she was an energy engineer for  
21 the Wisconsin Public Service Commission. And as many  
22 of you know, Commissioner Svinicki has a quick and dry  
23 wit. She has demonstrated this many times in these RIC  
24 speeches. I am sure she won't mind me sharing this  
25 anecdote with you.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1           The Commissioner has been very supportive  
2 of me, both as a Regional Administrator and then in the  
3 past six months as the Director of the Office of NRR.  
4 She gave me some advice when I started with the job in  
5 NRR, when we talked about some of the challenges that  
6 they were facing. She told me if I was not going to  
7 be part of the solution, I was the precipitate.

8           With that, I give you Commissioner  
9 Svinicki.

10           (Applause)

11           COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Good morning.  
12 Thank you Bill for that introduction, and for warming  
13 up the crowd with a bad joke. There might be more of  
14 those to come.

15           I'm very pleased to take part in this  
16 year's Regulatory Information Conference. Thank you  
17 to each of you for attending this session, and also for  
18 all of you tuning in. We have a number of remote  
19 broadcast locations so that our Regional staff and  
20 other offices can tune in without having to travel to  
21 this particular location.

22           Also, I think we're live webcasting. If  
23 not, it will be archived. To those of you who tune in  
24 later, thank you for tuning in.

25           I want to add my thanks to those of others

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 to all of the many NRC employees who both work on this  
2 conference and its preparation and then volunteer to  
3 do a lot of the important logistical tasks throughout  
4 the week. It is their efforts that make the conference  
5 a success each year. So I want to thank them.

6 I'd like to acknowledge as well our many  
7 colleagues in attendance joining us from across the  
8 country and from around the world. Thank you for  
9 traveling the distances that are required to be here.

10 To those of you who have welcomed me into  
11 your power plants and facilities and academic  
12 institutions throughout the course of the year, I want  
13 to thank you for sharing my journey of continuous  
14 learning as an NRC Commissioner, and for communicating  
15 your experiences to me first hand. I think it's a very  
16 important part of regulating with true comprehension.

17 I'd also like to acknowledge the presence  
18 of important partners from other federal and State  
19 agencies who are here today. The NRC's many critical  
20 relationships with other government entities are  
21 essential to the achievement of our mission. Thank you  
22 for taking the time to be here and in many cases, for  
23 agreeing to be presenters at one of our technical  
24 sessions.

25 Finally, thank you also to my own staff for

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 your assistance and support throughout the year. I am  
2 grateful to all of you. I've expressed a lot of  
3 gratitude. I'm also really grateful for the  
4 opportunity to be standing here today.

5 I recently read, I've been maybe focused  
6 on the concept of gratitude, I read last October or  
7 November the most wonderful expression, a definition  
8 of gratitude. It was from Melody Beattie. She's  
9 written a book called "The Language of Letting Go."  
10 She wrote, Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It  
11 turns what we have into enough.

12 Speaking of enough, this is my seventh RIC  
13 speech. I was sworn in on March 28. So when the RIC  
14 rolls around for me in mid-March, it's kind of the --  
15 we have fiscal years and calendar years, for me this  
16 is the end of my NRC year. It's kind of the turnover.

17 Each time I approach the RIC, I try to come  
18 at it afresh and anew because we have many folks who  
19 come every year. I'm sure we have new participants as  
20 well. At the end of the day, I have to confess to you,  
21 I try to come at it afresh, but this is the raw material,  
22 it doesn't change. I'm kind of, you know, this is what  
23 I have to work with, this is me. So the pattern is set.

24 So for those of you who enjoy what I do,  
25 it's unlikely that you'll see a departure from that

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 today. I'm always working at the last minute to  
2 prepare for the RIC, as if I didn't know it was coming  
3 or something. Which is kind of crazy.

4 But that was true again this year. This  
5 is a phenomenon that my sister was charitable enough  
6 to call your process. We were talking on Sunday and  
7 she asked me, well, you know, what constitutes the rest  
8 of your Sunday, and your Sunday evening, just as family  
9 members do.

10 I said, well, I need to get started on a  
11 speech that I am going to be delivering on Tuesday. I  
12 expected her to be, to have a -- we're very close, and  
13 she's my older sister, so she's very free with her  
14 feedback and criticism and advice. I expected her to  
15 be critical of me, so it was refreshing that she said,  
16 but that's your process Kristine. That's how you do  
17 things.

18 So, you know, I just bless our families,  
19 right, because they can take what we don't find a  
20 strength about ourselves and they turn it into this  
21 winsome, you know, quirk that we have that is a good  
22 thing. So that's my process, I guess.

23 Now, Eric Leeds is not up here with me.  
24 I've done a lot of RICs and I'm accustomed to having  
25 Eric here. Eric is gone, like so many others.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1           We have the very capable Bill Dean, and  
2 he's showing himself to be very capable today. I told  
3 Bill before we got started. I said the buzz in the room  
4 is that this appears to come quite naturally to you.

5           But, you know, I don't always do well with  
6 change. But Bill, it's all right, because I'm on my  
7 fourth Chairman, my third EDO, and so I can deal with  
8 a change in moderation. That's hardly the biggest  
9 change I've seen in my service as an NRC Commissioner.

10           But the curious thing is, I find that I'm  
11 becoming more sentimental about things as the years go  
12 by. I don't know if this is something about moving  
13 through life, no one warned me about it. I seem to  
14 notice all this change.

15           Maybe it's kind of staying in one place for  
16 a while and you become an observer, a first-hand witness  
17 to the kind of river of change that goes on and it flows  
18 into the vast sea of change that is life. That is  
19 constantly moving on.

20           This past New Year's, which is also a time  
21 to be melancholy and reflective, or to go to a big poker  
22 party, which I also did, but I had time to be melancholy  
23 partly because I went all in and I blew it. I have a  
24 very forward-leaning betting strategy that is not  
25 commensurate with what's in my hand, though. I

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1       figured, oh, just through posture I can pull it off.  
2       But I had more experienced people at the table with me.  
3       Anyway, we all had fun.

4                   But the song Auld Lang Syne, I really  
5       started to dwell on this because partly I've always been  
6       amused by this song, which is not an American invention  
7       by any stretch. It's Robert Burns. I don't know if  
8       that's any relation, distant or other, Steve. Our  
9       Chairman Burns is shaking his head. But perhaps  
10      distantly he is related to Robert Burns.

11                   But it's a very, very old song. Of course,  
12      it's a drinking song, so that's why it's gone in and  
13      out of fashion and certainly stayed around for a long  
14      period of time.

15                   Can you still hear me? My mic's gone a  
16      little strange. No? Okay.

17                   COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: My mic went off,  
18      so that's new, Dean. If you've provided for that, that  
19      was a new thing that you've done.

20                   (Laughter)

21                   MR. DEAN: I didn't get any turnover from  
22      Eric on that.

23                   COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: You know, it's  
24      kind of like operator training or something. You've  
25      got to throw scenarios at them and -- okay, thank you

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 for that, but nice try.

2 Did anyone watch Saturday Night Live, in  
3 the opening skit? It was that wonderful actress who  
4 impersonates Hillary Clinton. But she said, you know,  
5 for those of you who think I'm going to go down over  
6 scandal acts, she goes, Anice try.@ That isn't how  
7 Hillary Clinton goes down.

8 (Laughter)

9 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: So, you cutting  
10 off my mic is not going to stop me, Mr. Dean.

11 (Laughter and applause)

12 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Okay. I've  
13 gotten a sign that they're working on it. I'll just  
14 continue to have this awkward posture of looking like  
15 I'm in the football line, at the scrimmage.

16 I was told once, and this was in some of  
17 the interesting times on the Commission. Chairman  
18 Jaczko's Chief of Staff came to my Chief of Staff, Joe  
19 Sharkey, and said, I want you to know that we're aware  
20 that Commissioner Svinicki's picture fell off the wall  
21 in the lobby. And only her picture by the way, but  
22 we're having it re-hung.

23 Jeff told me that. I hadn't been aware  
24 that my picture fell off the wall. I said, great, the  
25 actual atoms of the building are rejecting me now.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 They're just shoving my picture off the wall.

2 (Laughter)

3 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I was talking  
4 about Auld Lang Syne. Okay.

5 MR. DEAN: You were sentimental.

6 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I was  
7 sentimental, yes, and talking about that. I will  
8 remember this very fondly, this moment of having the  
9 mics not working well.

10 People sing this song and the most  
11 interesting thing about it is that nobody remembers the  
12 words and we don't know the verses. By the way, it's  
13 a very beautiful lyrics and a beautiful song if you ever  
14 hear like an acoustical rendition. All the stanzas  
15 that nobody sings because nobody knows the words to are  
16 a wonderful reflection on journeying through life with  
17 friends you know, throughout the course of life and then  
18 remembering them.

19 But the funniest thing about it is that  
20 confusion about what the song means is captured so  
21 perfectly in that bit of dialogue in that movie When  
22 Harry Met Sally. Does anybody remember this? Because  
23 the big romantic culmination is at a New Years party.  
24 But to kind of break the tension, and it's because it  
25 is a romantic comedy, so in case I needed to define that,

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 that which mixes romantic elements and comedic  
2 elements.

3 So the comedic element there is that Harry  
4 looks at Sally because the song is on, and he goes, what  
5 does this song mean? My whole life, I don't know what  
6 this song means. I mean, so he goes on to say -- and  
7 my mic is working. Should old acquaintance be forgot?  
8 Does that mean we should forget old acquaintances or  
9 does it mean if we happen to forget them, we should  
10 remember them? Which is not possible, because we  
11 already forgot them.

12 (Laughter)

13 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: But I like  
14 Sally's response, because she says, well, maybe it  
15 means that we should remember that we've forgotten them  
16 or something. And then she goes on to say the most  
17 beautiful part, she goes, anyway, it's about old  
18 friends.

19 Although it has absolutely nothing to do  
20 with the RIC, I started talking about Eric. We had the  
21 thing with the mic, so this is a little recap. And I  
22 lost my train of thought.

23 (Laughter)

24 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: But the point is  
25 that I have made a lot of friends at NRC in the many

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 years that I've been there, and that isn't something  
2 that I took for granted. I'm sure I hoped for it. I  
3 don't know that I expected it. But I'm very, very  
4 grateful for it.

5 So we do as Bill said, we see a lot of the  
6 people who have moved onto other opportunities here at  
7 the RIC. That's a kind of special element for those  
8 of us here at NRC. It is a bit of a reunion. And I'm  
9 grateful to see many of you and for all you've done to  
10 contribute to my learning in my time as an NRC  
11 Commissioner.

12 There have been a lot of changes, as I  
13 noted, but some things change and some things don't.  
14 One of which is that there's an expectation among some  
15 of you that I will give you a joke. I've given this  
16 advice to others, and I will look, I think, expressly  
17 at Commissioner Baran. If you're going to tell a joke  
18 tomorrow morning, you will have to tell a joke forever.

19 So I hope that you will think long and hard  
20 about that. By the way, you're a second day  
21 Commissioner and I feel -- you know, I was a second day  
22 Commissioner at the RIC for a long time. The good thing  
23 about it is you should just claim tomorrow as yours.  
24 It's like the field is yours alone to occupy. It's your  
25 territory, and I really look forward to your remarks

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 tomorrow morning.

2 As I stood at the RIC, it's been the  
3 practice more often than not that I am publically  
4 welcoming and expressing my pleasure at serving with  
5 new members of our Commission.

6 So I will do that right now and say I have  
7 been very pleased to work with first Commissioner Burns  
8 and then Chairman Burns and Commissioner Baran. I  
9 really welcome them both to our Commission. I look  
10 forward to our continued work together on the important  
11 issues before us in concert with our colleague,  
12 Commissioner Ostendorff.

13 So, now onto the joke. Okay, now, not  
14 everyone wants to hear this joke, but those of you who  
15 don't can get on your smartphones if that's what you  
16 desire to do. But the narrow part of the audience wants  
17 this and encourages me slavishly, and you shouldn't do  
18 that, because you'll get what you want.

19 Okay, so, helium walks into a bar and  
20 orders a beer. The bartender says, sorry, we don't  
21 serve noble gasses. He doesn't react. Get it, He,  
22 H-E, he.

23 (Laughter)

24 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: And then the He  
25 doesn't react?

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 (Applause)

2 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Now, the only  
3 thing better than over-explaining a bad joke, which is  
4 what I just did, is telling a second bad joke.

5 (Laughter)

6 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Have you heard  
7 about the new band called 1023 megabytes? They haven't  
8 had any gigs.

9 (Laughter)

10 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Okay. So we've  
11 dispensed with that.

12 (Laughter)

13 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I have this, you  
14 know, I'm fussing with my hair and I heard George  
15 Apostolakis is here, although I have not been able to  
16 see him and say hello to him. He used to go after me  
17 and then talk about fussing with his hair and it was  
18 so fun.

19 But I have a piece of hair that won't fall  
20 where it should. Women and others, maybe men who have  
21 long hair, I don't know, there are some that do, will  
22 have some sympathy with this. But that clump of hair  
23 decided to be the bane of my existence today. Is that  
24 why you shut my mic off? Is so that I wouldn't say that?

25 (Laughter)

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Okay. I  
2 generally share with you some thoughts that have been  
3 on my mind, as my sister was kind enough to describe  
4 as my process. I will also note that I collected these  
5 thoughts for you at a time when I had given up caffeine  
6 for three weeks after a 30-year love affair with coffee.  
7 I had never given it up for that long.

8 So I'm going to look at my work product now  
9 and go, what did I produce in that three weeks and what  
10 did it look like? I broke down this morning. I  
11 shouldn't admit that. But woo-hoo after you don't have  
12 it for three weeks and you have a cup of coffee. Boy,  
13 you're ready to go.

14 (Laughter)

15 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: So, on Sunday  
16 night, as I told my sister, according to my process,  
17 I'm working on this, I'm watching the Walking Dead.  
18 I'm on my work email. On the commercial breaks I'm  
19 jotting down things I wanted to talk about, looking  
20 through a file of ideas that I just gather over the  
21 course of the year.

22 That's also part of my process. I'm doing  
23 laundry. I'm preparing lunches for the week, and it  
24 occurs to me that that fits perfectly, because one of  
25 the things I wanted to talk about is a concept I've heard

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 referred to as the too muchness of our lives.

2 Last June a Swiss-born philosopher, Alain  
3 de Botton, he shocked the world, or at least his nearly  
4 half million twitter followers, when he tweeted that  
5 everyone should delete twitter from their cell phones.  
6 Now, he was contacted by the Washington Post to  
7 elaborate in more than 140 characters on his particular  
8 social media philosophy and he responded as follows:

9 Twitter is of course a wonderful thing, but  
10 it is also the most appalling distraction ever  
11 invented. It sounds so harmless, but it wants you  
12 never to be in touch with yourself again and never to  
13 have time to catch up on the updates from the person  
14 you really need to keep close to you, yourself.

15 He went on to say, we need relief from the  
16 twitter-fueled impression that we are living in an age  
17 of unparalleled importance. We need on occasion to be  
18 able to go to a quieter place where that particular  
19 conference and this particular epidemic, that new phone  
20 and this shocking wildfire, will lose a little bit of  
21 their power to affect us.

22 A flourishing life requires a capacity to  
23 recognize the times when Twitter no longer has anything  
24 original or important to teach us, periods when we  
25 should refuse imaginative connections with strangers

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 and hashtags, when we must leave the business of  
2 complaining, insulting, haranguing, exclaiming to  
3 others in the knowledge that we have our own priorities  
4 to honor in the brief time still allotted to us.

5 Taking this concept even further, the  
6 author Karl Greenfeld, in a New York Times piece  
7 entitled "Faking Cultural Literacy," comments on the  
8 superficial nature resulting from our attempts at  
9 following so many topics at once.

10 He writes, it has never been so easy to  
11 pretend to know so much without actually knowing  
12 anything. We pick topical relevant bits from  
13 Facebook, Twitter or emailed news alerts and then  
14 regurgitate them. Instead of watching Mad Men or the  
15 Super Bowl or the Oscars or a Presidential debate, you  
16 can simply scroll through someone else's live  
17 retweeting of it, or read the recaps the next day.

18 Our cultural canon is becoming determined  
19 by whatever gets the most clicks. What we feel now is  
20 the constant pressure to know enough at all times lest  
21 we be revealed as culturally illiterate, so that we can  
22 survive an elevator pitch, a business meeting, a  
23 cocktail party, a visit to the office kitchenette, so  
24 that we can post, tweet, chat, comment, text as if we  
25 have seen, read, watched, listened.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1                   What matters to us, awash in petabytes of  
2 data, is not necessarily having actually consumed this  
3 content firsthand, but simply knowing that it exists,  
4 having a position on it, being able to engage in the  
5 chatter about it. He notes that a recent survey by the  
6 American Press Institute reveals that six in ten  
7 Americans acknowledge that they do nothing more than  
8 read the headlines of the news, and in a crushing moment  
9 of honesty in his own piece, he notes parenthetically  
10 that he knows this only because he skimmed the  
11 Washington Post headline about the survey.

12                   (Laughter)

13                   COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: He continues as  
14 follows: It's understandable that one party or even  
15 both parties in a conversation may not have the faintest  
16 idea of what is being talked about. We're all very  
17 busy. Busier, if I believe the harried responses, when  
18 there are any at all, to most emails I send, than any  
19 previous generation, and because we spend so much time  
20 staring at our phones and screens, texting and tweeting  
21 about how busy we are, we no longer have the time to  
22 consume any primary material.

23                   We rely instead on the casual observations  
24 of our Facebook friends or the people we follow, or,  
25 well, who, actually? Who decides what we know, what

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 opinions we see, what ideas we are representing as our  
2 own observations? At the end of the day, I suppose it's  
3 hard not to feel a little bit kind of pushed around by  
4 the system, by all this busyness, by the tyranny of it,  
5 by the weight of it.

6 In the Commission's vote this year on the  
7 use of qualitative factors in regulatory  
8 decisionmaking, I quoted from an essay by commentator  
9 and author, Margaret Wentz, entitled "I'm an Adult,  
10 Stop Nudging Me." She observes the following.

11 The idea that public officials have a duty  
12 to help you do what's in your own interest has taken  
13 off with a vengeance, thanks in no small part to  
14 something known as nudge theory. Nudge theory, which  
15 was invented by two guys named Robert Thaler and Cass  
16 Sunstein, is on the face of it quite benign, she writes.

17 It recognizes that we are flawed,  
18 irrational and occasionally foolish creatures, who,  
19 left to our own devices, cannot be relied upon to save  
20 for retirement, eat our vegetables, or floss. The idea  
21 behind nudge theory, also known as soft paternalism,  
22 is to design public policies that make the right choices  
23 much easier.

24 The most obvious problem with nudge  
25 theory, she writes, is that it divides the world into

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 we and they. We are the informed, the dispassionate,  
2 the rational ones who happen to be in charge. They,  
3 the poor schlubs, are myopic, lazy, poorly informed and  
4 poorly controlled. They need to be saved from  
5 themselves.

6 The other problem is that regulators and  
7 governments are people too, she writes. They have  
8 their own fallibilities. A third problem is that soft  
9 paternalism can morph pretty quickly into soft  
10 authoritarianism. That's the problem in a nutshell,  
11 she writes. It's a short step from nudging people to  
12 terrorizing them and pushing them around.

13 Many fields, especially public health, are  
14 full of people who think they have a corner on the truth.  
15 These people often bemoan the fact that the public  
16 doesn't trust them. But the reason we don't trust them  
17 she writes, is quite simply that they are simply  
18 imposing their own preferences on the rest of us.

19 Now, in an exaggerated sense, our  
20 incessant busyness has now become its own competition,  
21 its own tyranny. But it's also become a kind of a  
22 prestige and a status symbol. In an essay entitled  
23 "You're Probably Too Busy to Read This," the Washington  
24 Post staff writer, Brigid Schulte, builds on the  
25 subject. Her essay begins as follows.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1           One man says he works 72 hours a week  
2 because everyone in his office does. He's thinking  
3 about cutting back on sleep so that he can become more  
4 productive. A woman says the last time she had a moment  
5 for herself was when she went for her annual mammogram.  
6 Then another woman bursts in, apologizing for being  
7 late to the focus group convened precisely to discuss  
8 the fast pace of modern life. She got stuck in traffic.

9           The author writes, I look out the window  
10 from our perch at the bar of the 18-story Radisson Hotel  
11 and see a handful of cars at a stop light. Beyond that  
12 acres of corn fields. We are not in Washington, New  
13 York, Los Angeles or some other Type-A city. We're in  
14 Fargo, North Dakota.

15           She writes, somewhere around the end of the  
16 20th century, busyness became not just a way of life,  
17 but a badge of honor. And life, sociologists say,  
18 became an exhausting everyday-athon. People compete  
19 over being busy. It's about showing status.

20           We do this even as neuroscience is  
21 increasingly showing that, at our most idle, our brains  
22 are most open to inspiration and creativity. She  
23 points out that our views on leisure have changed very  
24 dramatically in a short period of time. She uses these  
25 statistics.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1           She says, during the 1950s, the post-World  
2 War II boom and productivity, along with rising incomes  
3 and standards of living, led economists and politicians  
4 to predict that by 1990 Americans would work 22 hours  
5 a week, six months a year, and retire before age 40.

6           In kind of another cultural theme, she  
7 said, she writes, that while accepting the Republican  
8 Party's nomination for President in 1956, Dwight  
9 Eisenhower envisioned a world where, "leisure will be  
10 abundant so that all can develop the life of the spirit,  
11 of reflection, of religion, of the arts, of the full  
12 realization of the good things of the world."

13           Think about that statement from a  
14 presidential candidate accepting his party's  
15 nomination. If you reflect on it for a moment, our  
16 current thinking diverges so strongly from that  
17 sentiment that when I try to picture any of the  
18 potential candidates for President in 2016  
19 campaigning and espousing any similar theme, that seems  
20 like preposterous to me. Nobody would say that now.

21           You know, Ellen DeGeneres, I really enjoy  
22 her comedy, and she had a bit, she was reflecting on  
23 the show Mayberry RFD. Does anybody remember that  
24 show? I'm the only person? I grew up at a time before  
25 there was cable and networks. Broadcasters needed to

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 fill content and so they rebroadcast a lot of old shows.

2 But she talked about how that show begins  
3 with Andy and Opie walking down the street and it's just  
4 whistling. This was her comment, I never forgot that,  
5 she goes, when there's time for whistling, there's a  
6 lot of time in a show when there's time for whistling.

7 So we've come really rather far from that  
8 concept. Now, I don't preach about all of this from  
9 some lofty perch myself, some state of perfect  
10 alignment and inner harmony and peace. I struggle like  
11 everyone else in this room.

12 On top of that, some of you right now are  
13 smirking because I'm known to be, what should we say,  
14 a rather focused individual, and it's true that I care  
15 a lot about what I do. I consider being a Commissioner  
16 a real honor and a privilege. It's a very, very solemn  
17 responsibility to have laid on your shoulders, even  
18 though it's an honor and a privilege.

19 But I also care about it because life is  
20 finite and precious and uncertain. We all know that.  
21 Consequently, I would say that I'm sure, you know, some  
22 will take exception to this, but I think sometimes that  
23 putting all of yourself into the things that you care  
24 about is all you really have to contribute, to bring.  
25 Sometimes you bring all of yourself into an issue.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1           There are many management philosophies,  
2 different things work for different people, but I read  
3 something written by Admiral Rickover that I agree  
4 with. He was repeating that the devil's in the  
5 details, and he didn't invent that -- he may have said  
6 that he invented it, but he didn't invent that phrase.

7           (Laughter)

8           COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: But he said it  
9 this way. He said, the man in charge must concern  
10 himself with the details. If he does not consider them  
11 important, neither will his subordinates. It's hard  
12 and monotonous to pay attention to seemingly minor  
13 matters.

14           In my work, he said, I probably spend about  
15 99 percent of my time on what others may call petty  
16 details. Most managers would rather focus on lofty  
17 policy matters. This is the part that resonates with  
18 me, because I've observed this. He said, when the  
19 details are ignored, the project fails. No infusion  
20 of policy or lofty ideals can then correct the  
21 situation. Still, in those disquieting moments when  
22 I am fatigued with doing the hard and monotonous work  
23 and I am still plagued by doubt that the permanent  
24 stench of failure is going to hang over everything I  
25 do, it would seem that stepping back and having a

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 reasoned and perhaps more elevated approach to the  
2 concept of what we care about, and why we attempt  
3 anything, is called for.

4 In this vein, I found insight in the  
5 writing of author Anthony Doerr. He wrote a piece  
6 entitled "Costumed Drama." It was about a tragically  
7 bad homemade Halloween costume he had made when he was  
8 seven, and it was really an amusing piece. More  
9 broadly, he's commenting on the themes of trying and  
10 failing, and he writes about it this way.

11 He says, I'm a novelist. Every day I fail.  
12 My drafts, when I complete them, which is not often,  
13 are inevitably shadows of what I had hoped they would  
14 be. I can't ever fully execute the glorious and  
15 inarticulable dreams in my head. It has taken me 30  
16 years to appreciate the wisdom of my mother, that the  
17 beauty is not in the result, but in the attempt.

18 To build our castles in the clouds, we need  
19 to live with the fear that we will stink, that no one  
20 will pay attention that we will fall like trees in the  
21 empty rainforest, the fear that we are going to take  
22 our glorious, flawless, nebulous ideas and butcher them  
23 on the altar of reality.

24 Or as Flaubert put it in "Madame Bovary,"  
25 none of us can ever express the exact measure of his

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 needs or his thoughts or his sorrows. Human speech is  
2 like a cracked kettle on which we tap crude rhythms for  
3 bears to dance to while we long to make music that will  
4 melt the stars.

5 Although I work very hard on preparing my  
6 votes, some days I come closer to expressing that exact  
7 measure, as it was called, of my thoughts than others.

8 The Commission's current deliberation on  
9 the integration of the staff mitigating strategies  
10 work, and it's a deliberation that's still ongoing,  
11 work is still ongoing, but it was a unique voting  
12 opportunity for me. My vote will be made public when  
13 the Commission finishes its work on this matter, but  
14 it allowed me to step back because this issue on the  
15 integration of mitigating strategies work and flooding  
16 work became to me kind of emblematic of taking stock  
17 of where we are since Fukushima, of what we've done and  
18 what we've looked at.

19 So I did want to express that one piece of  
20 that was that larger reflection of stepping back and  
21 saying, where are we now? We're nearly four years out,  
22 at the time I wrote this vote, from that tragic  
23 occurrence, and I wrote the following based on this  
24 broader reflection. I said, I respect the work of the  
25 Near Term Task Force, whose members did yeomen's work

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 in 90 short days and whose final report stands out among  
2 those of other nations in erudition and thoughtfulness,  
3 but it is time to speak plainly to the fact that no one  
4 has the whole answer in 90 days.

5 In the intervening years since the Task  
6 Force's report, the Commission has deliberated and  
7 closed their Recommendation One. The Commission  
8 staff, as a body made up of hundreds of experts, has  
9 taken the Task Force's good efforts and advanced the  
10 Agency's thinking significantly beyond it.

11 All of the Agency's contributors are to be  
12 commended for their long labors to this end. To the  
13 extent that this paper advances merely one in a whole  
14 series of informed refinements to our regulatory  
15 response to Fukushima, the Commission should continue  
16 to foster this NRC culture of continuous evaluation,  
17 feedback and improvement. To do otherwise would be  
18 inconsistent with the NRC principles of good regulation  
19 and detrimental to the cause of safety. My vote  
20 continues and concludes by saying, U.S. nuclear power  
21 plants are operating safely. From statements made by  
22 an Agency former Chairman as he stood in the Rose Garden  
23 with President Obama in the earliest days after the  
24 Fukushima accident, to testimony given last December  
25 before the U.S. Congress by our most recent former

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 Chairman, NRC has given and repeated this assurance.

2 In responding to the Fukushima event,  
3 therefore, the NRC's obligation to the American people  
4 is fulfilled not through an elusive search for a state  
5 of perfect knowledge of risk, the adding of decimal  
6 places to analysis of high consequence events of small  
7 probability. It is fulfilled through the achievement  
8 of tangible, real world safety improvement.

9 In the United States, this approach has  
10 yielded significant regulatory action and industry  
11 response thus far. The staff asks us to reaffirm that  
12 we intend to stay this course and pursue this goal for  
13 the reassessed flooding hazard and presents the staff's  
14 step-wise implementation actions for a rational means  
15 to its achievement. I affirm this goal and provide my  
16 support to the staff's intended actions.

17 I wanted to share that with you again.  
18 Chairman Burns talked about this earlier. One of the  
19 pitfalls, I think, of being a Commissioner is we look  
20 the least holistically at issues before the Agency.  
21 The nature of our process -- and it's a good process  
22 because it's very structured and disciplined. It's  
23 scrutable, it's transparent. It yields a public  
24 voting record, a decision record, so people know not  
25 just what the Commission did, but why we did it. But

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 the unfortunate nature of it is, like the candy  
2 processing line for Lucy, things go past. We don't get  
3 to look across to actions. We're very focused on  
4 what's in front of us now.

5 I wanted to share that because it was  
6 something I had written in a contemporary sense that  
7 reflects on all of what we've done since Fukushima. As  
8 my first Chief of Staff, Jeff Sharkey told me, he said,  
9 nobody reads your votes, so you need to talk about them.

10 So I've done that now, but the things we  
11 care most about are going to manifest themselves in our  
12 actions. In a manner, though, that's unique and  
13 individual to each of us. The key is in the conquering  
14 the tyranny of our busyness, our too muchness, our  
15 everyday-athon. Doing so, as the philosopher, Alain  
16 de Botton, that I quoted at the beginning said, in the  
17 knowledge that we have our own priorities to honor in  
18 the brief time still allotted to us.

19 I think I'll finish -- I don't know what  
20 my time check is. Am I leaving time?

21 MR. DEAN: Yes. You have 20 minutes.

22 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Okay. I think  
23 one of the most poignant articulations about this came  
24 in President Ronald Regan's 1981 inaugural address.  
25 He was known as being a really eloquent speaker, and

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 I'm a real fan of that particular inaugural address.

2 It's the first time in modern history the  
3 swearing in ceremony had been moved to the West Front  
4 of the Capitol. If you're not familiar with the D.C.  
5 geography, that provides the most sweeping vista of the  
6 District of Columbia and all of our national monuments.

7 So, when he said this, this audience would  
8 have been able to kind of pivot their head around and  
9 see that. He said, beyond those monuments to heroism  
10 -- and he was talking about the Washington, the  
11 Jefferson -- he said, is the Potomac River. On the far  
12 shore are the sloping hills of Arlington National  
13 Cemetery, with its row upon row of simple white markers  
14 bearing crosses or stars of David. They add up to only  
15 a tiny fraction of the price that has been paid for our  
16 freedom.

17 Under one such marker lies a young man,  
18 Martin Treptow, who left his job in a small town  
19 barbershop in 1917 to go to France with the famed  
20 Rainbow Division. There on the Western Front he was  
21 killed trying to carry a message between battalions  
22 under heavy artillery fire.

23 We're told that on his body was found a  
24 diary. On the flyleaf under the heading, AMy Pledge,@  
25 he had written these words: America must win this war.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 Therefore, I will work. I will save. I will  
2 sacrifice. I will endure. I will fight cheerfully  
3 and do my upmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle  
4 depended on me alone.

5 Admiral Rickover expressed the same idea  
6 when he stated, act as if you were going to live forever  
7 and cast your plans way ahead. You must feel  
8 responsible without time limitation, and the  
9 consideration of whether you may or may not be around  
10 to see the results should never enter your thoughts.  
11 I believe it is the duty of each of us, he said, to act  
12 as if the fate of the world depended on him.

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause)

15 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: You need to know  
16 that Mr. Dean just did a little theatrical ploy with  
17 me. He wanted me to finish my speech so I don't  
18 actually have as much time as he said.

19 MR. DEAN: That was a good ploy. All  
20 right --

21 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: You're tricky,  
22 man. I'm learning that about you.

23 MR. DEAN: Thank you. Yes, ma'am. So,  
24 these questions actually are kind of grouped together,  
25 but basically they orient around, what would your

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 priorities be in your remaining time as a Commissioner?  
2 Or what things would you want to change at the NRC if  
3 you could?

4 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: It's funny, when  
5 I first started at NRC people said, you know, well, what  
6 do you want to achieve? What's your agenda?

7 I really honor the work. The Agency's  
8 mission is so important, and the people working there,  
9 that I feel serving in this type of position is like  
10 stepping into a river, and there will be papers that  
11 were ongoing when you stepped in, and you'll join those  
12 deliberations, and not everything will be completed at  
13 the time you leave. You're going to leave some issues  
14 open that you didn't have a chance to see through to  
15 conclusions.

16 But I think that turnover on the Commission  
17 is a matter of law. It's intentional. So you will  
18 step in and out. I don't bring a personal to do list  
19 or a set of checked boxes. I think in terms of what  
20 I would like to see changed, I wouldn't frame the  
21 question that way.

22 I've become impressed that NRC is capable  
23 of so much. I think that I want to see NRC be as great  
24 as it can be, and I think that that's embedded in Project  
25 Aim. I think that's a lot of our, what Chairman Burns

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 called a mid-life crisis. But I've got to tell you,  
2 honey, you don't have a mid-life crisis at forty, okay?  
3 Forty is the new thirty and we don't have mid-life  
4 crisis at forty.

5 (Laughter)

6 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: But you can think  
7 that if you want.

8 (Laughter)

9 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: You know, I think  
10 we want to have the fullest expression of what we're  
11 capable of, and I look forward to watching the staff  
12 do that. I think that's an organic thing that happens  
13 within the organization.

14 Politicals kind of come and go. We're  
15 part of that constant change. But I look forward to  
16 seeing NRC on this journey of further improvement. And  
17 I think they have everything at their hand that they  
18 need to be not just successful, but I think stunningly  
19 successful at that.

20 They need to dig deep and do that and want  
21 it and own it for themselves.

22 MR. DEAN: Okay. I have a handful of  
23 questions here that are oriented around the same thing,  
24 and that is the Part 52 and design certification review  
25 process and your views on the timeliness of that

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 process.

2 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I don't make a lot  
3 of forecasts. What I do is I look at, you know, what  
4 has happened. So I try to be very fact based as is NRC's  
5 culture.

6 We have seen that some of the design  
7 certifications, and, again, they're for large light  
8 water reactors, which is something that we have a lot  
9 of experience in regulating. They've taken longer I  
10 think than the crafters of Part 52 would have predicted.  
11 The COLs, the same thing.

12 I know that we are in a process of always  
13 looking at Part 52 lessons learned. We've not  
14 exercised the entirety of Part 52. Is that my mic  
15 again?

16 MR. DEAN: Yeah.

17 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Maybe that's how  
18 they'll get me off the stage. In any event, I think  
19 there's a tremendous amount of wisdom embedded in those  
20 who crafted Part 52. It wasn't me, so I'm not being  
21 self-congratulatory.

22 I think it's got a lot of wisdom embedded  
23 in it and we just need to be sure that we're executing  
24 it true to the core of those who generated it. They  
25 felt it was an improvement on the way things had been

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 done. They created it, but we need to execute it  
2 consistent with that.

3 MR. DEAN: Okay. The last question I have  
4 --

5 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I'll repeat it  
6 right closely into my microphone like I can do. I keep  
7 backing out of that huddle.

8 MR. DEAN: Okay, right. But basically it  
9 involves multi-generational work issues with basically  
10 four generations of people who --

11 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Isn't that great,  
12 though? The question suggests that having four  
13 generations of people overlapping in a workplace or on  
14 a team, well, it doesn't say that in the question, but  
15 I interpret it to be like that's a challenge.

16 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Mr. Ostendorff,  
17 you're going to have fun up here.

18 (Laughter)

19 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: I think that  
20 that's a real strength to have that. I am so enthused  
21 in dealing with the young generation in nuclear, with,  
22 you know, whether or not people are members of that,  
23 just the incoming professionals into nuclear, because  
24 this is a generation of people coming in and they're  
25 not going to be content to just take what is bequeathed

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 to them and say this is the technology. You know, this  
2 is your dad's Cadillac or Oldsmobile, or whatever that  
3 tagline was. They want to take the nuclear sciences  
4 and these technologies and make their own imprint over  
5 the course of a 30, 40, 50 year career, whatever it's  
6 going to be.

7 I love the fact that they come in there and  
8 they want to change more than the carpets and the  
9 drapes. That's why they're excited about SMR. They're  
10 excited about the promise of best technology applied  
11 to the issues that their generation and future  
12 generations, as they see it, will have to solve. So  
13 I think it's tremendous strength to have different  
14 generations all collaborating together.

15 I think in the absence of that, I think we'd  
16 be much weaker than we are.

17 MR. DEAN: Okay. Now, there's a question  
18 that I would have liked to ask, but you don't have to  
19 answer it. Which is, does your poker betting strategy  
20 somehow apply to how you do your votes?

21 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Oh my gosh,  
22 there's a ton of strategy in being an NRC Commissioner.  
23 Are you kidding me? It's fun.

24 A poker hand, actually I'm probably too  
25 forthcoming. Maybe that's why I lost all the money.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 It was interesting, there was such a great group,  
2 because at more than one time the person with the most  
3 just said they didn't want me to leave the table, and  
4 maybe they just found it amusing to watch me lose all  
5 my bankroll.

6 They would just shove chips over at me, and  
7 so I lost not only my own bankroll, but like all kinds  
8 of other people's. But they kept winning it back from  
9 me. So maybe they didn't really care.

10 (Laughter)

11 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: But, yes. Yes,  
12 there's strategy. It's been interesting because, you  
13 know, I don't always have much of a prospect of success.  
14 Success being, of course, you know, wanting to win,  
15 wanting to be on the prevailing side of a question.

16 You do work within the art of the possible.  
17 You look at how you might shape really essential  
18 elements as opposed to just being a part of being the  
19 prevailing view that carries the day. I've tried to  
20 communicate this in terms of the Agency's own  
21 non-concurrence and differing views process is, you  
22 know, I know what it is not to be on the prevailing side  
23 of a question.

24 It's so amusing to me that the Commission  
25 itself really models the notion of their different

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 views and somebody prevails and somebody doesn't. So  
2 I thought, really, the notion of non-concurrence and  
3 differing views is so organic to the whole Commission  
4 structure, the way our Agency is you know, topped by  
5 a Commission.

6 Our structure gives the perfect role  
7 model, you know, that at the end of the day a decision  
8 has to be made. There are those whose views carry the  
9 day. There are those, and you know, from personal  
10 experience, and I know it's not fun being in this  
11 category, but if you went out there and expressed it  
12 honestly and candidly and it didn't carry the day,  
13 there's no dishonor in that. That doesn't mean that  
14 somebody was good or bad or anything else.

15 I think that that's a real strength of the  
16 Commission. But, sure, there's strategy in that. Of  
17 course. It's got nothing to do with poker. I'd like  
18 to think if, however many years I'm at NRC, I reflect  
19 back on that, it will reflect on a record of greater  
20 success than my poker playing.

21 (Laughter)

22 MR. DEAN: And unfortunately, that's all  
23 the time we have. We have to concede the stage to  
24 Commissioner Ostendorff.

25 COMMISSIONER SVINICKI: Yes.

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1

(Applause)

2

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter

3

went off the record at 11:18 a.m.)

4

5

**NEAL R. GROSS**

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS  
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701