

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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37TH ANNUAL REGULATORY INFORMATION CONFERENCE

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COMMISSIONER CROWELL PLENARY

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WEDNESDAY

MARCH 12, 2025

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The Session was held at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel & Conference Center and via virtual platform, at 8:15 a.m. EDT.

SPEAKERS

THE HONORABLE BRADLEY R. CROWELL, Commissioner, NRC

THE HONORABLE STEPHEN G. BURNS, Former Chairman, NRC

THE HONORABLE WILLIAM C. OSTENDORFF, Former Commissioner, NRC

JOHN TAPPERT, Acting Director, RES

AMY POWELL, Chief of Staff to Commissioner Crowell, NRC

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

8:16 a.m.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Thank you, John, for the introduction. As I get myself organized here I'll take the opportunity to, as I always will, to correct the pronunciation of my home state. It is Nevada and not Nevada, but that's a second time for the record in two weeks.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So good morning, everyone. Thank you all for being here on Day 2 of the NRC's Annual Nuclear Regulatory Information Conference. This is my third appearance at the RIC. Every year I make the font on my remarks a little bit bigger and I still can't see them because my eyes are getting worse as the years go on.

John, I appreciate the Office of Research co-hosting the RIC this year. I'm not going to blame you for the early morning slot, but Ms. Executive Director, I don't see her there, but you and I will be having a conversation before RIC 26.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: It's wonderful to be here today with my fellow Commissioners, past and present, our international partners, the NRC Staff, licensees, vendors and distinguished guests.

To get us started this morning I thought I'd share

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with you five bullets about what I did last week.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'll spare you the blow-by-blow, but I will highlight that I did not include preparing for this week's RIC nearly as much as any of us would have liked. And I'm kidding. Mostly.

But despite the early hour and lack of preparation I take comfort knowing I've secured some top notch talent to share the stage with me this morning. More on that shortly.

In all seriousness, I appreciate all of you for joining today, and this week, both in person and virtually. To learn and engage on the many technical, tactical and policy issues important to us all.

I think we're off to a great start following excellent keynotes yesterday, which included a mix of fun, adventure and poignancy. Thank you to my Commission colleagues for their remarks yesterday.

For those of you in the audience I've had a chance to visit with, thank you for the insightful conversations. For those of you who I have not had an opportunity to chat with, I hope we get that opportunity before the week is over. But if not, other opportunities will present themselves. Stakeholder engagement doesn't start and stop during the RIC week, it's a year round obligation that benefits us all regardless of where we sit.

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It was a great honor yesterday to hear from Senator Capito, the Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which is our primary authorizing committee on the Senate side of Capitol Hill. I appreciated the time she spent with us in sharing a bit about herself given all that's going on in Congress this week.

As my NRC colleagues are well aware, I share the Senator's apparent disdain for early morning speaking slots, but here I am. We're here today in a mostly full room despite the hour.

And like former EPW Chair Senator Carper, I'm confident that Senator Capito will continue to both challenge and support the NRC in our important work. I look forward to working with her, her staff and the rest of the Senators on EPW, including the Committee's new ranking member, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island. I had the pleasure of serving on Senator Whitehouse's staff during his first term in the Senate when his seat and my spot on the bench were at the polar opposite end of the dais.

While Senator Whitehouse is well-known for his dogged efforts to address climate change, it is surprisingly less well-known that he has been a supporter of carbon-free nuclear power for his entire career in the Senate. I can attest to this fact given my still vivid recollection of the early days of his first

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term when he asked about pebble bed nuclear reactors. I misunderstood the topic and presumed he wanted to talk about the Pebble Mine in Alaska, which was a hot topic at the time. Suffice it to say I had a little homework to do that night, but we continued to have productive discussions about the benefits of carbon-free nuclear energy well into his first term, and after I left his office.

And I share that anecdote just as one of many reasons why I think Senators Capito and Whitehouse will build a positive results-oriented working relationship on EPW; a relationship that will provide a platform to continue leading bipartisan efforts in the Senate to facilitate a successful, enduring and safe future for commercial nuclear power well into the next 50 years. Or at the very least, the next two years.

As we embark on the next 50 years of NRC history, I was honored to moderate a technical session yesterday focused on the evolving role of the NRC's independent Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. I appreciate all who participated on the panel, in the audience and online. And let me again thank ACRS Chair Dr. Walt Kirchner for his willingness to help organize and participate in a session focused exclusively on the past and future role of the advisory committee.

Traditionally, ACRS Members have not participated formally in the RIC. But I think it's a benefit to have them and

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will continue to do so in the future.

Thus I was pleased to engage them this year given the critical role ACRS will play in building public confidence in our shared responsibility to safely deploy the next generation of nuclear reactor technologies and advance fuels in the United States. I think we had a spirited and informative conversation about how ACRS can effectively and efficiently perform its statutory role well into the future.

As I've said on several occasions, ACRS is the NRC's technical conscience and an indispensable part of building, maintaining and expanding the social license necessary to support a growing role for nuclear power as part of our nation's energy mix. As we chart the next 50 years for the NRC, much is changing around us, and within the NRC - even since last year's RIC.

First and foremost, I'm no longer the newest NRC Commissioner! Unfortunately that did not get me out of the dreaded first thing in the morning speaking slot. That said, it's a sacrifice worth making to have Commissioners, to have the Commission back to a full complement of five members. Commissioner Marzano, welcome to the club. I look forward to working with you and maintaining our collective focus on getting things done.

We also have a new Chairman. Congratulations Chairman Wright! You and I have developed an honest, open and collaborative

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working relationship and I hope to see that continue and grow during your tenure as Chair.

Likewise to my friend and colleague, Commissioner Hanson, thank you for your service as NRC Chair. It's not an easy job, but yet you did it with class and dignity for four years, including leading the Agency through the height of the pandemic. I look forward to continuing to work with you to navigate the many challenges and opportunities ahead for the NRC.

And to my friend Commissioner Caputo, I'm talking about you in a hot second.

On the policy front, one of the most notable challenges since last year's RIC is the ADVANCE Act, which passed the House and Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support. At a high level the ADVANCE Act helped position, sorry. At a high level the ADVANCE Act set forth a variety of overarching expectations to help position the NRC for success in the years to come. The ADVANCE Act expressed the clear intent of Congress for the NRC to establish efficient, timely and predictable licensing reviews, including developing clear strategies, guidance and regulatory approaches for new and novel nuclear technologies.

The Act also calls for continued and expanded engagement with our international partners, which is one of the many reasons it's terrific to have so many of our regulatory counterparts here this week. I believe we have representatives

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from 51 countries attending this week, in addition to many domestic and international stakeholder groups.

The "gold standard" for nuclear regulation shines brightest when it is the standard employed globally. For the United States, the NRC's recently updated mission statement will be our guiding light as we pursue these goals.

However, without a skilled nuclear workforce we're certain to fall short. And unfortunately, the degree of difficulty in which the NRC workforce must operate has increased dramatically in recent weeks.

Many of the actions taken by our new Administration are antithetical to what is needed for the United States to play a lead role in the emerging nuclear renaissance and are contrary to the expectations Congress set for the NRC, including our ability to implement many provisions of the ADVANCE Act. But the NRC Staff is nothing if not resilient in the face of change.

Our Staff is already moving forward, navigating the new rules of the road, making hard and important decisions, and maintaining focus on our newly minted mission statement. I cannot thank the NRC Staff enough for their continued dedication during these difficult times. Your talent and your expertise are remarkable, your commitment and resolve are unmatched. We are in this together, and I'm here to support you in any every way that I can.

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Earlier this year I hit the halfway point in my current term on the Commission. During my first RIC speech in 2023, I shared my vision for what we need to accomplish in the next five years to enable the next generation of commercial nuclear power on a timeline that is meaningful for our energy security, and for decarbonizing the energy sector.

In short, and at a minimum, we must successfully and safely license and begin construction on at least one utility scale advance reactor before the end of this decade. Furthermore, this goal must be complemented by adding new nuclear capacity via power uprates and safely restarting one or more recently shutdown reactors.

And we must achieve these milestones while maintaining the safe operation of our existing fleet. Neither the NRC nor our licensees can afford any foot faults or unforced errors at this critical juncture.

Moving forward, the Commission will continue to face key policy decisions related to new technologies, deployment strategies and regulatory frameworks. For the five of us, some decisions will be straight forward requiring little to no negotiation or debate among us.

But there will be tough calls as well, requiring us to find common ground. And dare I say it, be willing to compromise. This is critical for staff to move forward in concert with our

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agency's mission. And to do so safely and efficiently.

The Commission cannot afford to deadlock and fail to craft the workable policy decisions that our staff relies on for direction and stakeholders deserve for clarity. Or in other words, to stay focused on the big picture the Commission must prioritize collegiality.

Fortunately, this is exactly what congress intended for the NRC. As my colleague, Commission Caputo, wisely reminded us at a recent Commission meeting, "...50 years ago, Congress wisely decided that the importance and complexity of nuclear safety was best met with an independent, five-person Commission, bringing to bear their range of experience and perspectives in a collegial manner." I could not agree more.

Indeed, when she and I were going through the Senate confirmation process together in 2022, me for the first time and her for the second time, I was surprised by the similar refrain from nearly every Senator I met with on the importance of collegiality. Will you be collegial? Do you agree to be collegial? Et cetera, et cetera. Senators, their staff, stakeholders of all stripes asked about it over and over again.

At the time, I took the refrain of collegiality somewhat for granted. I assumed it was an obvious part of what it means to serve as an NRC Commissioner. However, as I settled into my seat on the Commission, I discovered that collegiality was

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more allusive than I expected.

But as I stand here before you today, I remain both committed and optimistic that the Commission can find the will to function as a collegial body. Indeed, I view collegiality and efficiency as mutually dependent.

Now that the Commission is back to a full complement of five Commissioners, I hope each of my colleagues will join me in recommitting ourselves to fostering the collegial atmosphere necessary to fulfill our shared responsibility as NRC Commissioners. We owe it to the NRC Staff, our licensees and applicants, and to the American people for whom we serve. If we hope to solve hard problems and accomplish big things, it requires strong relationships and honest engagement.

Talking issues through, brainstorming and coming up with workable solutions are keys to success. We cannot let collegiality fall victim to competition. If we do, we fail. All of us. You. Me. All of us.

We can avoid this by recognizing that collegiality is the Commissioner's superpower. So let's embrace it and accomplish big things together. Thus, it is in this spirit, as we embark upon the next 50 years of NRC history, I'm honored to have two former Commissioners join me on the stage bright and early this morning to talk about the importance of collegiality and share their thoughts and observations from their time on the Commission.

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So I'm pleased to welcome former Chairman Steve Burns and former Commissioner Bill Ostendorff to the stage. Gentlemen, please come up and have a seat. Both of these gentlemen are well-known to many of you and need little introduction. But I'll offer a quick refresher to help the stage for our conversation.

Steve Burns practically grew up at the NRC, arriving in 1978 (I'll note one year after I was born) and retiring as the Agency's General Counsel in 2012. He then came back to the Commission in 2014, serving as Chairman from 2015 to 2017, and stepping down from the Commission in 2019. Former Chairman Burns has graciously let us pull him back in quite often. In fact, this is his second appearance with me during the RIC this year. Thank you, Chairman Burns.

Bill Ostendorff served as Commissioner from April 2010 to June 2016. Bill brought to the Commission his wealth of experience and skill from a distinguished career as an engineer, legal counsel, policy advisor on Capitol Hill and Naval Officer.

Gentlemen, I thank you for joining me today. I've benefited from your advice and counsel during my time on the Commission, and I look forward to joining both of you in the hot seat today to discuss the Commission's superpower of collegiality. So thank you all, and look forward to the discussion today.

(Applause.)

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Is this seating

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arrangement okay?

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I guess I am in the hot seat right in the middle, thanks, gentlemen.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: That's what comes with seniority, you get to choose. So here we are in front of a crowd of our peers and our stakeholders. And I think they, and we, would benefit from a discussion about how collegiality has worked during different points in time on the Commission so we can get a little historical perspective for different dynamics and strategies for making sure the Commission is as effective and productive as possible.

So let me just start with a softball for both of you, and then we'll get into it. And we'll also do some questions from the audience. Chairman Burns, let me turn to you first. Do you want to just give your sense of what you view as the role of collegiality and how you employed it during your time on the Commission?

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Sure. As you said, we're a multi-member, oh, I shouldn't say we're, that's the old days for me. This is a multi-member commission and formed that way like, you know, any number of them. And the idea is that you have with multiple members on the Commission, you have, I think, to want to gain from the insights that they all have.

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Now granted, the Chair has particular responsibilities, or powers, but that doesn't obviate the need for engagement with the colleagues, the other Commissioners, and keeping them informed, you know, helping them and hearing and listening to them during the process. And that's what I found.

When I came to the Commission, I was a Commissioner for about two months and then was designated the Chair because Dr. MacFarlane had decided to take a position at George Washington University. And what I found is that, certainly as I was going into a new role as chair, I needed to reach out to my fellow Commissioners, hear what they thinking, what their priorities were.

I was in the unusual circumstance because for at least a couple of them, Bill Ostendorff and Kristine Svinicki, I had been the General Counsel under them before leaving for the NEA for about three years. So it was kind of a different role.

But having known them and then joining with Jeff Baran, who was, he and I were basically confirmed together, it was, you know, developing that relationship and that, you know, viewpoint about how can you help me in terms of this role, what do you see, particularly for Bill and Kristine who had been there and sort of seen some of the challenges that the agency was going through, what was their perspective. And so, you know, reaching out and trying to pull on that, that knowledge and that context that they

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had been living in as Commissioners was very important to me.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And, Bill, your time on the Commissioner overlapped with Chairman Burns, but also was, for a couple years, when he wasn't there. Do you want to give some perspective on how collegiality played a part in your tenure on the Commission?

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Sure. First, Brad, thanks for the invitation to be here and to join my good friend Steve. First of all, this collegiality piece is not rocket science. It's really human relationships 101. And it's things we do on the home front with our friends, colleagues elsewhere. And it all kind of informs how we interact with other people.

I think when I came here, and I still believe this to this day, an essential foundation for having a collegial environment is a trusting relationship with others. Without that trusting relationship it's difficult to be collegial.

So we're in a polarized society in many respects right now. I'm going to back up here and say that I like to think that we tried to have meetings with other Commissioners. Let's say, periodics one on one with Steve and Kristine and Jeff and Greg, George and Bill.

Those discussions were a two-way exchange in a very civil manner. And even if we didn't agree on any aspect of a SECY paper, we still could listen to that other person, understand his

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or her views and then be better informed walking out the door, shaking hands and say, thank you for being straightforward with me. And I think it's that important element of being trusting and able to have a candid open conversation that was, I think, essential then, and still now.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And I think that is also one of the challenges to, you know, fostering collegiality in everything that we do. We have so much to do that often we get, we just don't have enough time to lean in, as you said, and listen. But we need to find that time to listen because it's the ability to agree to disagree has as much value as agreeing to agree because you understand where people are coming from and you can formulate solutions.

How did collegiality amongst you and your fellow Commissioners during your time on the Commission influence how your Commission Staff worked with each other?

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: I'm sorry, how did Commission Staff --

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So, you know, when the Commissioners are operating in a collegial manner, does that translate to the Staff in each Commission Office having better working relationships?

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Well they should. I think they should. And I think that's part of what I think that's

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probably one of the things we look for as Commissioners. You know, we're very, I think lucky to have a great set of people to draw on.

And Commissioners do different things. There are a lot of, in many respects, probably primarily staffing comes from within the agency itself. Others have, will bring people from the outside. What I think the important thing for the staff who come from the inside is to help coach those who come externally.

I know, I actually worked for a Commissioner, Admiral Carr, who was Commissioner and then Chair. And his initial chief of staff was from the outside of the agency. And I found that for me and for my colleagues, technical colleagues, our job was to sort of train him or get him up to speed and make sure he understood the agency.

But going back to your question, your point, it's extraordinarily important for the staff to work well with each other across the offices. And in a way there, it sort of helps gain intelligence for the Commissioner from the standpoint of what is the colleague thinking or where, you know, what are they looking at in terms of particular issues and the like.

I mean, I realize it's partly... this is the product of the government in the Sunshine Act. And it's common because you have the, you know, the problem that you can't have more than a majority. You can't have more than two. In other words, you

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can't have three, a majority, meet on some issue that wouldn't qualify for the closed meeting issue.

So, you know, this communication between offices is extraordinarily important. As is the communication, you know, between, I think, individual Commissioners themselves.

And even on some things, the other things I would note, that on occasion - it didn't happen frequently - although I think for Bill and I can recall one event, sometimes some of the, you know, the external, what I'll call travel or events, going with another Commissioner to one. We did an event in Spain --

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes. Exactly.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: -- a nuclear security event in Spain, which was very interesting, and got to see the Spanish plants and all.

And I think that, you know, that's great if you can do it. I mean, Commissioners' schedules are going to take them all over, but that's another aspect, if it's possible, I think can grow that collegiality --

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: -- and understanding each other.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I certainly agree. Bill?

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes, so I want to agree with everything Steve said. I want to go back to a comment

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you made at the beginning of the question, Brad, which is about finding time to do this.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: If it's important, you will find the time.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Right.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: If it is important you'll put it in your calendar. So, I've seen a few of my former staff here, John Tappert, Molly Marsh, Cathy Kanatas, and there is probably some others I'm missing, but every morning at 8:30 we would meet in my office, chat about the day. We would talk about an upcoming periodic that afternoon where Chairman Burns wants to talk to you about issue X.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: And we kind of strategize and discussed that and say, what do we think about that in advance of the periodic. We put those periodics on our calendar, we put joint briefings with other Commissioners on our calendars. So I remember very clearly during the post-Fukushima time period, where the Commission was wrestling with a tough issue associated with differing professional opinions on external hazards flooding.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I remember Chairman

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Burns asked me to come to his conference room and we had a joint briefing by those staff members who had DPO positions they wanted to talk about. And so we both heard the same thing from people who had a very strong objection to the staff recommendation. Because those kind of things, we intentionally schedule the interaction, whether it be a periodic, whether it be a briefing about the staff or another trip. I know I counted, in preparation for this, I think eight trips I had with other Commissioners. And I think those opportunities to travel together, again, cement that trusting relationship in ways that nothing else can.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: That's certainly been my experience as well during my time on the Commission. I mean, early in my tenure Chair Hanson, at the time, invited me to join him on the tour of Peach Bottom. And it was my first opportunity to visit a reactor as an NRC Commissioner. And subsequent to that our new chair, Chairman Wright, we have been fusion brothers to an extent in visiting fusion facilities, and that's been beneficial. And Annie and I have had a number of joint briefings that I think are a huge benefit for the exact reasons that you have said that.

What does it signal to the rest of the NRC Staff when they see the Commissioners working in that way together? Does it trickle down and translate to the Staff in a positive way writ large at the agency?

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: I think generally it does

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because I think on some of that, you know, as Bill noted, even in the circumstance we were being briefed on in the DPO, I think it shows that the Commissioners want to be engaged with staff, understand where the staff is coming from knowing that, you know, those papers, those rules, those orders, the policy issues that come before the Commission, we're not sitting in the back when we're writing them out, or our staff is.

And that's the support we need from the staff as an agency. And that's the significance of the staff. To provide that background and context and proposals that the Commission ultimately acts upon. And recognize that it doesn't, it doesn't get, it's not just the stamp of approval every time, there are different viewpoints that happen.

There are other things. I think , what I had mentioned as well is, sometimes there are initiatives that I think the Commission wants to take, or individual Commissioners may propose, that we ask ultimately for the staff to respond to. But again, that's based on an engagement on it with the Staff.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So, Steve, how does the dynamic change in terms of an approach to collegiality, if at all, when you're the chair versus just a Commissioner?

Is there a different approach or a different tactic that you have to employ or how does that dynamic change?

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: I think for the large part I

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think it's the same. It's the same. But as the Chair, because you have certain responsibilities with respect to, you know, basically you're in effect like the CEO of the organization. So we're sort of in a middle point in some respects between the Commission as a whole and the staff. And understanding where the staff is coming from.

And part of it, I think, the staff has that responsibility to communicate. But I think through the Chair you also have that responsibility for that kind of communication and engagement with the Commission to see where the Commission is, where individual Commissioners feel they are in that.

And the other part of it is, I think you do have a responsibility in terms of communication and engagement with the other Commissioners because, as the "official spokesperson" of the agency. Or that person, you know, you're the one, although, you know, and it's not that other Commissioners don't have engagements on the Hill and things like that, but you're basically, as the Chair, you're the one that gets pulled down for the various meetings with, sometimes it's the staff, but usually with Members and, you know, the Ranking Member, or even the Chair of the committees here and there.

And your responsibility, I think, is to get back and get the messaging back to other Commissioners, this is what I'm hearing, and that type of thing. So keeping them informed I think

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is a big role in that regard.

But one other thing, and I'm thinking of Bill on this one as well, is as chair, while the Commission ultimately sets the entire agenda for the Agency, or what it's going to look at or what is seems as priorities going forward, I think one of the things you should do as the Chair, is you're listening to other Commissioners, and then some of them that may have a particular interest, or particular insights on an issue that's arising, I'm think of, Bill, like digital instrumentation and control, really sort of took the lead on that.

And I think from my standpoint that was very helpful for the agency to get, there was work being done on the staff, but to sort of get a focus on at the Commission because, as you say, ten years ago when I came back that was one of those, you know, rubber ducks, or whatever the dogs chew on. We needed to make some progress. And I think Bill sort of helped us get that way.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes. And I'll let Bill chime in here too, but I'll throw myself and our new Chairman under the bus here a little bit as, you know, "lowly poli sci undergrad majors," you know, we really benefit from the expertise of our colleagues and of our staff. But it is certainly one of the most frustrating parts of being a Commissioner is the inability to talk to more than one of our colleagues at a time. It really means you have to communicate well with your staff, and your staffs had to

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communicate well amongst each other, because things can get lost in translation and that's often when things can turn sideways.

Bill, you want to add on to anything that --

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I need to ask you to retract the adjective "lowly" in front of political science majors.

(Laughter.)

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I taught political science in the Naval Academy for five years after I left here and I have great respect for it.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay. Well, I'll insult the major a little bit more in the fact that my undergrad mistakenly gave me a bachelor of science for my undergrad, and so --

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes. No --

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: -- it served us well, right, Chairman?

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes. Exactly. Yes.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: I was a German major. But that one I could read the scientific information.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: No, I think, as Steve, and you've discussed, the staff picks up very quickly --

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: -- on the example of

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any Commissioner. And so if the Commissioner is out there "being collegial with colleagues" and having meetings and talking to other people, even popup conversations, the Staff picks up on that and they bring it back to their own daily habit, their daily regimen as something they want to achieve. So I think that role model example is critically important.

Every now and then, it didn't happen very often, every now and then you'd have a little dust up on some issue. And the support at that time to sit back and listen and understand that dust up, and sometimes that dust up can be resolved by staff-to-staff interaction, or sometimes requires a Commissioner-to-Commissioner interaction. It's just a matter of talking to people and understanding what's going on.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes. I'll give an example of that during my time. You know, during our consideration of Part 53, you know, Commissioner Caputo and I ended up in different places on, you know, on QHOs and a comprehensive safety metric, but we sat down and talked through it with each other and our staffs and got a better understanding for the perspectives. We came to different conclusions but we had the conversation. I just wish we had more time to have those conversations on more topics more often. But it is a challenge with schedules.

Let me ask another question and then we'll turn to see if we have any audience questions. But does collegiality play a

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role, or a similar role or different role, with regard to policy issues as it does with personnel issues? Is that a, is there a role for collegiality for making personnel decisions at the Agency?

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Sure. I, under appropriate circumstances the Commission has, in the past, I assume it continues today, to have closed meetings where sensitive issues associated with HR type selections, I can remember discussions we had to select two different EDOs during my time on the Commission, to select the general counsel when Steve left to go over to Paris. So there are opportunities to have those closed discussions to get it involved in the details of who might be the next person in the critical position.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes. And, Steve, you might be able--

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: -- to add to that with your perspective as Chair too, which is --

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes, I would agree with Bill. And, you know, I know there were a few instances in which we had in effect, because that was one of those circumstances with which the statute allows for the closed meeting personnel where we had basically a group interview with candidate for a couple of positions. I'm not going to go into detail what they were.

But while, you know, I think, and I think we actually

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probably proceeded where individually we may have had interview, done interviews, and then when we got down to sort of the final selection, you know, one or two or three, it was a, you know, we had a group interview. And I really felt, from my standpoint, that really helped me because I could hear sort of in time what others, you know, what was on the mind of other Commissioners in terms of their questions and engagement with the interviewee.

And then also I think it helped us, while we, and I can recall one where we may not have been wholly aligned on the selection in the beginning of the meeting, I think we came down to the conclusion that we were. It wasn't that we, you know, each one, each person had one candidate or whatever, but, you know, that there were, maybe one Commissioner, maybe two that, although in my tenure it would have been one Commissioner because I never had, really as Chair more than four.

But, you know, it was a way of, I think us, the rest of sharing with our colleague, this is how we are, why we are. And then brought our colleague along.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: I just want to quickly add, and completely agree with Steve's point. I think the process of having a joint Commissioner closed meeting where individual candidates come in, you ask questions, everybody can hear what everybody else was saying or asking about, that was a far richer process --

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FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: -- than would have been the case if we individually, as Commissioners, were interviewing one candidate at a time.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'm going to look to my Chief of Staff, Amy Powell, to see if there are any questions from the audience to offer. And while she does that, I'll just say that if anyone is wondering why it's the three of us sitting up here, it's not just because we're three old White dudes but it's nominally because we represent left, right and center. But I don't highlight that for any reason other than to say that politics shouldn't play a role in this stuff.

We've had, you know, we all have good conversations, and we should, regardless of where we may be on an ideological spectrum, so that's a key part of the collegiality as well. Amy, any questions from the audience?

MS. POWELL: We do - from the ghost of chiefs of staff present. I would have arrived at midnight but that was not your assigned time slot.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay.

(Laughter.)

MS. POWELL: Can you share an experience when you changed your view on a matter after talking with one of your

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Commission colleagues?

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Great question. Either one of you want to go first as we all think about that?

(Laughter.)

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Wait.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: I'm trying to think of one. Well I guess what it is, I think I probably can't recall particularly a radical from one end to the other, but, you know, it's more like, you know, you're sort of, you're here on the dial and maybe you're saying, I'm a little reluctant in going over. I can recall doing, you know, doing that.

And I sort of say that in the long run that the outcome was good, acceptable. Most of where, and maybe I came from it from the beginning is where I got, or where we would get. And so, maybe adding something, or retracting something from the proposal was fine. I saw that.

That's part of a, sort of a compromise, if you will, it's negotiation, compromise --

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Well you had --

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: -- in looking at, you know, how do we get a sort of a consensus decision.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And you, you know, had the benefit of, or the burden of, an accumulated history and knowledge from being at the agency --

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FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: -- and so issues weren't necessarily new to you as opposed to myself. You know, I was learning many issues for the first time.

And I'll turn to Bill here in a second. I'll just give an example from my perspective. Early on in my tenure we were debating have the right regulatory pathway for regulating fusion. And I was --

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: -- initially very skeptical of the idea of it being done through materials framework via the states. I just had a hard time conceptualizing why that was the best route forward. But as I learned more about the science behind fusion technologies and how our agreement states work, et cetera, I came around to realizing that the path forward that we chose was the right one. And I think we're on the right path now because of it. Bill?

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes. No, one example I'd offer, Brad, is, I had spent 16 years on sea duty on submarines operating reactors for the Navy. I felt pretty good about being an operator from my Naval Reactors experience, but I did not know much about PRA. And so, my good friend and colleague, George Apostolakis, had several tutoring sessions for me in his office about PRA. And we tried to use those to help inform our

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votes on various SECY papers. One of them I remember specifically dealt with physical security. And he and I took a trip to Salem Hope Creek to look at their physical security profile post-9/11 and to see "how does that comport with a risk-informed security approach?" This is one example.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Okay. Amy, I think we have time for one more question if there is one in the queue?

MS. POWELL: I think we can do this one fairly quickly. You touched on it a little bit. Can you give some idea of the types of topics that tended to test collegiality during your time on the Commission?

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Attended --

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Types of topics.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Budgets.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: But you know, I'd say even budgets were, we had, Project Aim was going on --

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: In the past during our time on the Commission, Steve.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: And I think though that was a potentially contentious area. We had some meetings

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where we tamped that down and were able to, I think come to consensus, on what the staffing size ought to look like going forward for the NRC.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: I'll offer another example of efficiency metrics. I know all of our, myself and my Commission colleagues agree on the need for efficiency and for metrics, but we've had challenges in landing on the correct approach to that. But it's a good worthwhile conversation that we continue to have. And even just having the conversation I think has moved the ball forward.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes on that.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: So on efficiency, one comment I'll make very briefly, most the SECY papers that come up for votes are not binary. They're not zero, one. They're not yes or no --

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: -- not affirm or approve or disapprove, there is some wiggle room in there. And there's an opportunity in a periodic, for instance, to kind of look at, well you may not agree with me, Steve, on this point --

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: -- but what about this other area and where can you find some overlapping Venn

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diagrams or consensus to these periodics to help improve efficiency so that votes of the Commissioners up-front have some structure to them that does not require SECY to struggle in the SRM process?

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Right. Right. Now, I would agree with Bill is that, it's very few things are just yes or no. I mean, there are, a lot of papers are, you know, you're going to do this or, you know, to help the Staff move on with certain things. But particularly the big policy here, and you've mentioned like Part 53. But big policy areas where you've got a lot of interesting things, you know, spinning around here and you sort of bring them, bring them together, as Bill says, is an important, well, it's the role of the Commission to reach that kind of consensus on issues or policies going forward.

And that's where I think the collegiality particularly comes in. Because we are, we may have some differing views. They may not be far apart on a lot of them, but, so how we sort of get along in terms of "let's move the thing forward, let's not have it basically stall for extraordinary amount of time."

You know, the better part of that is compromise. I remember one time, I mean, it's the old, the old phrase, "Paris is worth a mass." Henry, IV. And that is some compromise, you know, is always, I think helps. And I think it helps the agency get along in its way. And in terms of making effective decision making, making timely decision making. So that's important from

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my standpoint.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Well I'll wrap this up by thanking both of you sincerely for participating in the conversation. And I'm going to give Chairman Burns a little bit of a hard time.

I was making fun of his tie this morning, which if you can't see it, it's ostriches, some of which have their heads up, and some of which have their heads in the sand.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And I was like, well that's kind of, it's symbolic of collegiality. Collegiality means you got your head up, and not being collegial means you got your head in the sand.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So maybe you can find five ties for all of us.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: So, thank you, gentlemen.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: All right, thank you.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: And thank you all for your questions.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Yes, thank you.

FORMER CHAIRMAN BURNS: Thanks, Brad.

(Applause.)

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FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Thanks, Brad.

COMMISSIONER CROWELL: Yes.

FORMER COMMISSIONER OSTENDORFF: Appreciate it.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the
record at 9:02 a.m.)

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