

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittees on Energy and Power & Environment and the Economy
Hearing on “Oversight of NRC Management and the Need for Legislative Reform”
December 12, 2013**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The NRC’s role in protecting public health and safety and the environment is a vital one: one that I strongly support and one that should be adequately funded. However, as I’ve pointed out to you all in the last two appearances before our subcommittees and in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear accident, I firmly believe that any additional regulatory costs should be justified by real safety benefits. I urge you all to remember that the costs of regulatory changes are ultimately born by consumers.

Also, as Chairman Shimkus and I recently pointed out in a November letter, the NRC’s staffing has grown 29 percent over the past ten years and the fees recovered from licensees, and hence their customers, has increased 58 percent. As we examined this further, we also found:

- In its annual review of the industry’s long-term safety trends, the NRC reported it has not identified “any statistically significant adverse trends in industry safety performance”. Yet there are 56 regulations pending.
- NRC received applications for 28 new reactors. Licenses were issued to build four and licenses for 16 reactors have been withdrawn or suspended. Yet, the NRC cites budget constraints and delays their reviews.

So, I agree with Chairman Shimkus that there seems to be an apparent disconnect between the growth in the NRC’s resources and what appears as a declining workload. We believe these concerns warrant more scrutiny and I expect to delve deeper into these issues going forward.

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