



March 21, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thomas Carper, Chair
Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Nomination of Christopher T. Hanson to be Member and Chair of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Carper, and Ranking Member Capito,

The Nuclear Innovation Alliance (NIA) is a non-profit, non-partisan “think-and-do” tank working to help create the conditions for success for advanced nuclear energy so it can be part of the climate and energy solution. We are writing to express our support of President Biden’s nomination of U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Chair Christopher T. Hanson to another five-year term and urge the Senate to move swiftly to confirm his nomination before Chair Hanson’s current term expires in June 2024. There are numerous important matters before the Commission that are critical to the future of nuclear power, and the NRC functions best with a full slate of Commissioners led by an experienced Chair.

Nuclear energy plays a critical role in our nation’s economy providing a source of reliable, affordable, and clean energy. The Commission and staff are currently working on important issues that will impact both the existing 94 nuclear reactors that provide approximately 20% of U.S. electricity (and 45% of U.S. carbon-free electricity) as well as new advanced nuclear reactors that can play an important role in our nation’s clean energy future.

Congressional commitments to nuclear energy have helped create the conditions for success for both existing and new nuclear reactors. Tax credits in the Inflation Reduction Act have enabled investments in existing nuclear power plants to ensure the continued operation of existing nuclear power plants and have encouraged many utilities to extend the operational lives of existing nuclear power plants as an invaluable baseload clean energy source. Funding and tax incentives for advanced reactors and new domestic nuclear reactor fuel production in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and congressional appropriations are helping catalyze the development and deployment of new advanced reactors in the coming decades. These new advanced reactors will play an important role in meeting the administration’s recent commitment to triple nuclear energy production by 2050. Realizing the economic, energy security, and climate benefits of continued and expanded use of nuclear energy, however, requires effective, efficient, and predictable regulation by the NRC.

The past five years have seen significant changes in both the nuclear industry and at the NRC. Growing interest in extending the operation of existing reactors and constructing new reactors, spurred by federal and private investments in technology development and deployment, have created new demands on the NRC. During Chair Hanson’s first term, the NRC successfully reviewed and approved a new reactor design (NuScale) and a construction permit for an advanced reactor (Kairos Power), and oversaw the completion and start-up of the first Generation 3+ reactors in the United States (AP1000 reactors at Vogtle Units 3 and 4). In addition to these

licensing successes, Chair Hanson has demonstrated a commitment to transforming the NRC into a modern, risk-informed regulator that remains focused on safety, transparency, and public accountability.

The Commission, led by Chair Hanson, has worked to create effective, efficient, and predictable licensing pathways for new nuclear power plants. Chair Hanson shaped Commission decision making on novel policy issues including a new licensing framework for commercial fusion technology and creation of a more performance-based and risk-informed methodology for emergency planning for advanced reactors. Under Chair Hanson's leadership earlier this year, the Commission voted on the draft proposed rule for 10 CFR Part 53, which will create a new regulatory framework to enable more effective and efficient licensing of advanced reactors. NIA believes the clear direction provided by Chair Hanson and the rest of the Commission in their vote clarifies the intent of the draft proposed rule and refocuses NRC staff on creating a new rule that aligns with congressional intent and the needs of external stakeholders. He has also directed NRC's Office of General Counsel to identify efficiencies in the mandatory hearing process under existing law to help ensure a more predictable and efficient licensing process while still maintaining agency focus on safety, transparency, and public accountability. These decisions have helped create a more flexible path forward for the effective and efficient licensing of new advanced nuclear technologies.

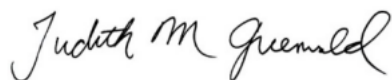
There will be additional policy and regulatory challenges in the next five years as the NRC works to license a wide range of advanced reactor technologies, with up to 25 applications expected, according to the agency's own estimates. Commission leadership and guidance to resolve these regulatory challenges will be critical to maintaining NRC management and staff momentum on new reactor licensing. The Commission and NRC staff are also in the midst of several rulemaking activities important to the future of advanced reactors. Chair Hanson's experience on the Commission will be invaluable as the NRC continues the development, review, and promulgation of new rules that will enable the more effective review and licensing of new nuclear technologies.

Nuclear energy can and should play a major role in ensuring we meet energy and climate goals, but success is predicated on the NRC's capability and capacity to effectively and efficiently review and license new nuclear reactors. The NRC plays a key role as an independent regulator. In particular, the deployment of advanced nuclear energy in the United States will require licensing processes that enable commercial deployment while maintaining public trust and social license for nuclear technology. The NRC Commission functions most effectively as a collegial body with a full slate of Commissioners providing input on NRC activities. If the Commission is reduced to only three Commissioners, it would reduce the predictability and timeliness of Commission decision-making on important regulatory issues.

We urge you to swiftly confirm Chair Hanson's nomination because he understands the importance of nuclear energy to meeting our climate and energy challenge, will prioritize the agency independence while promoting effective and efficient licensing reviews by the NRC staff, and will help maintain public confidence in the NRC as a trusted safety regulator. Chair Hanson's continued service and leadership at the NRC will provide a strong foundation for nuclear energy to play a major role in meeting our country's need for reliable, affordable, clean, and safe energy.

Sincerely yours,

Judi Greenwald

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith M. Greenwald".

Executive Director, Nuclear Innovation Alliance