

Summary of Remarks by Dr. Susan Winsor,
President, Aiken Technical College
before the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future
Augusta, GA, January 7, 2011

I am here to represent the institutions of higher education in our region. This includes technical colleges in Georgia and South Carolina ... two state universities ... and a major medical college – all of which are actively involved in training craftsmen, technicians, professionals and specialists for the workforce of the future.

I also chair the Nuclear Workforce Initiative, a forward-thinking program developed by the SRS Community Reuse Organization, to assess the future needs of regional nuclear employers and ensure that those needs are met. Our studies show that more than 10,000 workers will be needed in the next decade to support the expansion of nuclear energy in our two-state region. With about 50 percent of nuclear industry staffers nearing retirement, they must be replaced.

In addition, new jobs will be created that must be filled and that will come from programs like those provided at the local colleges and universities. This includes workers who will be needed at the Savannah River Site as well as those whose services will be required at commercial nuclear plants in our region. We are implementing a unified strategy to address present and future nuclear workforce needs.

The work we are doing here has been recognized as cutting edge, and our approach is now being duplicated across the country as we all prepare for an expected nuclear renaissance. In order for this renaissance to be fully realized, we believe it is essential for our country to reach consensus on the best way to close the nuclear fuel cycle. This is the great unanswered question about nuclear energy.

Finding that answer is important – and an essential step in increasing the role of nuclear power as an energy workhorse in this country.

We are concerned that billions of dollars have been paid into the Nuclear Waste Fund with no apparent benefit to date. We strongly believe the dollars in that fund should be applied directly to the task of closing the fuel cycle – whatever form that eventually takes.

For our part, we will do what is necessary to make sure the workforce is trained and ready for current and future jobs in the nuclear industry. With these talents, we can expand our horizons to encompass new nuclear technology – such as Small Nuclear Reactors – to create even more jobs ... increase the export of U. S. goods and services ... be an even better friend to the environment ... and enhance national security and energy policy.

We believe you will find the Savannah River Site and the region's educators of a skilled workforce to be willing and valuable allies. Your success is critical if nuclear energy is to more fully support our nation's energy future.

