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Stephen G. Burns Becomes Agency's 16th Chairman

Stephen G. Burns, a 33-year-veteran of the agency and an NRC Commissioner since November, has been designated as Chairman by President Barack Obama effective Jan. 1, 2015. Burns replaces outgoing Chairman Allison Macfarlane, who is stepping down to take a position at George Washington University.

“I am pleased to have been selected to serve as the NRC’s next Chairman. It is a great honor to lead the agency to which I dedicated most of my professional career,” Burns said. “I extend my thanks to Dr. Macfarlane for her service and wish her success in her new position. I look forward to working with my fellow Commissioners, the NRC staff and our stakeholders in carrying out the NRC's important mission.”

The NRC Commission is made up of five Commissioners, one of whom is designated by the President as Chairman. The Commission is a collegial body that formulates policies, develops regulations, issues orders and adjudicates legal matters. The NRC Commissioners serve five-year terms, with one term expiring every year on June 30. Burns’ term expires in 2019.

Burns is the second career General Counsel to be named Chairman since Marcus A. Rowden, General Counsel for the Atomic Energy Commission, became the new agency’s second Chairman in 1976.

Before returning to the NRC, Burns was the Head of Legal Affairs of the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris. Prior to that position, Burns had served at the NRC in a variety of roles, including as the agency’s General Counsel from 2009 to 2012. He began his career at the NRC as an attorney in the Regional Operations and Enforcement Division in 1978.

Burns received a bachelor's degree, magna cum laude, in 1975 from Colgate University in Hamilton, NY. He received his law degree with honors in 1978 from the George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he was an editor on the George Washington Law Review.

During his tenure at the NRC, Mr. Burns received the Distinguished Service Award in 2001 and the Presidential Meritorious Executive Rank Award in 1998 and 2008.