Peer Critique for Myname Here’s Persuasive Speech

I thought this was a great speech that really spoke to the majority in the audience that was against the idea of expanding America’s utilization on nuclear energy. The speaker began with a compelling attention-gaining device, that of the destruction of Hurricane Katrina and the resulting impact on our nation’s oil supply. This set up a clear problem that called for her argument that we need to reconsider the benefits and potential costs of nuclear fuel. She also established her ethos well early on, by being calm, friendly, looking directly at her audience at all times and speaking in a measured, clear voice that was well-varied and easy to listen to. At the same time, it was clear that she was not simply reading from her notecard; her delivery was relatively natural although it was obvious she practiced and knew her material well.

The speaker’s arrangement was good considering her audience—she spoke first about the most glaring concerns most people have about nuclear power: accidental meltdown, waste storage, and possible security breaches. She then provided information to the audience that effectively rebutted their concerns; aka new technology has been designed to address nearly all of these problems. After putting her audience at ease, she provided several independent advantages of using nuclear energy. Here she provided excellent reluctant testimony from a founder of Greenpeace that he was in support of nuclear energy as a source of clean fuel. Considering most of those opposed to nuclear energy are environmental groups, this was an excellent use of evidence from a source the audience would probably find credible. I also really liked her airplane analogy that illustrated that we accept some risks in order to gain higher benefits. In fact, I wish she had developed this further; it felt like it went by quite quickly. Her conclusion was great in that it provided it reviewed the primary points she was making and re-visited the purpose of her speech; New Orleans showed us how precarious and dangerous dependence on traditional fuel sources can be, and we need to consider new ones.

I think there are a few things the speaker can do to improve. While this was an excellent speech, there were still some areas for improvement. At some points it was a bit unclear as to where she was getting some of her information—she cited some very specific data and didn’t always tell her audience where this information came from. For the most part though, her oral citations were quite good. Her structure was fairly clear, but her signposts were not always reinforcing what that structure was. (e.g. she used “and” as her only signpost, numbers might have been more helpful). This was a bit of a problem since there was so much evidence and some of the sub-points were so closely related that I was unclear at times as to what environmentalist concern she was addressing. In her discussion of waste storage, she did not discuss current opposition many environmental activists have to the Yucca Mountain facility—it’s hard to prove waste storage isn’t a problem by using a primary example that many people consider to be a big problem—if
anything it might feed their concerns. While her delivery was also overall excellent, the speaker had a tendency to look a bit staged at points. While she engaged the audience frequently, there were moments where voice and gestures seemed unnatural. Her voice was quite clear and loud enough to be heard at almost all points, however, her volume dropped at points and it was hard to hear.