

June 22, 2012

Chairman Carl Levin
Ranking Member John McCain
Senate Armed Services Committee
Room SR-228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Levin and Ranking Member McCain:

We are concerned that your Committee chose to fund the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF) in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, even though President Obama requested no funding and the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittees in both Chambers provide no funding for this project. The Administration, the Appropriators, and the Los Alamos National Laboratory itself believe that this nearly \$6 billion proposed facility is not needed at this time. We would go further and say the facility is not needed at all; it is a waste of taxpayer money and should be canceled. We urge you to consider new information from the Laboratory and from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), both of which support alternative strategies to CMRR-NF.

As you know, CMRR-NF was envisioned as a replacement for an existing plutonium research facility at Los Alamos. It would play a role in the NNSA's production of nuclear weapons components, called plutonium pits.

However, a growing body of nuclear weapons and policy experts agree that CMRR-NF is not necessary to maintain the nation's robust nuclear weapons capability.¹ Furthermore, the Government Accountability Office has expressed concerns time and again that NNSA projects are consistently overpriced and significantly behind schedule.² Specifically, it found that CMRR-NF has faced a six-fold price increase and an 8 to 10 year delay.³

It is our understanding that Los Alamos recently released a 60-day study that determined that the Laboratory can maintain its plutonium pit manufacturing and sustainment needs without CMRR-NF. You have a "need to know" this vital information—which is not available to the public—and

¹ Project On Government Oversight, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Complex: Energy Department Plans to Waste Billions of Dollars on Unneeded Los Alamos Lab Facility*, January 18, 2012. <http://www.pogo.org/pogo-files/reports/nuclear-security-safety/energy-department-plans-to-waste-billions/nss-nwc-20120118-us-nuclear-weapons-complex.html>

² Some examples include the following reports: Government Accountability Office, *Department of Energy: Major Construction Projects Need a Consistent Approach for Assessing Technology Readiness to Help Avoid Cost Increases and Delays* (GAO-07-336), March 2007. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07336.pdf> (Downloaded June 19, 2012); Government Accountability Office, *Modernizing the Nuclear Security Enterprise: The National Nuclear Security Administration's Proposed Acquisition Strategy Needs Further Clarification and Assessment* (GAO-11-848), September 2011. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/330/323619.pdf> (Downloaded June 19, 2012).

³ Government Accountability Office, *Modernizing the Nuclear Security Enterprise: New Plutonium Research Facility at Los Alamos May Not Meet All Mission Needs* (GAO-12-337), March 2012. <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/589582.pdf> (Downloaded June 19, 2012).

we urge you and other Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee to review it before deciding to fund this unnecessary facility.

The NNSA already indicated in the Administration's budget request this February that it had found "existing infrastructure"⁴ that could meet its plutonium pit mission needs without CMRR-NF. We also have learned that the NNSA is expected to release its alternative plutonium strategy this summer, which will help determine if CMRR-NF is unnecessary to the nation's security. It is only prudent to postpone your funding proposals for the project until after the agency releases its alternative strategy, which likely will identify existing facilities that can carry out the laboratory's missions at significant savings.

Especially in this constrained fiscal environment, it is vital that all funding decisions be based on the most up-to-date information available. Given that viable secure, safe, and effective alternatives to CMRR-NF are available at a lower cost, we hope that you join the President and Appropriators in saving taxpayer dollars by ending this nuclear boondoggle.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this with you. To reach us, please contact Angela Canterbury or Mia Steinle of the Project On Government Oversight at acanterbury@pogo.org, msteinle@pogo.org or (202) 347-1122.

Sincerely,

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Rio Grande Foundation

Los Alamos Study Group

Rutherford Institute

National Taxpayers Union

Taxpayers for Common Sense

Nuclear Watch of New Mexico

Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Peace Action New York State

Tri-Valley CAREs, Livermore

Project On Government Oversight

cc: Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee
House and Senate Appropriations Energy and Water Development Subcommittees

⁴ Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2013 Cuts, Consolidations, and Savings*, p. 18. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2013/assets/ccs.pdf> (Downloaded June 19, 2012).