



August 30, 2012

Dr. Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

The Project On Government Oversight is writing to let you know that we oppose the latest attempts by Congress to fund a nuclear boondoggle at Los Alamos National Laboratory. We strongly supported your fiscal year 2013 budget request proposing to delay construction of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement-Nuclear Facility (CMRR-NF). We are concerned that some Members of Congress are bypassing the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) and Department of Energy's (DOE) authority and undermining your decision to zero out funding for the nuclear facility for at least five years—a decision overwhelmingly supported by experts, who know that this multi-billion dollar facility is neither affordable in the current fiscal climate nor necessary to national security.¹

As you well know, CMRR-NF would replace an existing facility and would also enable the nation to increase its production of plutonium pits, the primary components of nuclear weapons. This mission is in direct opposition to the New START agreement with Russia, which calls for decreasing both nations' number of deployed nuclear weapons.² What's more, during a decade of planning, the facility's estimated cost to taxpayers skyrocketed from \$375 million to almost \$6 billion.³

In the FY 2013 budget, the NNSA acknowledged that it has “existing infrastructure”⁴ to carry out CMRR-NF's proposed missions. Furthermore, we understand from sources that Los Alamos

¹Project 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> (Hereinafter *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Complex: Energy Department Plans to Waste Billions*); Letter from Project On Government Oversight et al. to Chairman Carl Levin, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and John McCain, Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, about halting funding for CMRR-NF, June 22, 2012. <http://www.pogo.org/pogo-files/letters/nuclear-security-safety/nss-nwc-20120622-pogo-senate-armed-services-nuclear-boondoggle.html>

²“Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms,” April 8, 2010, Treaties and Other International Acts Series, no. 111-5. 2010. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/140035.pdf> (Downloaded August 28, 2012).

³*U.S. Nuclear Weapons Complex: Energy Department Plans to Waste Billions*

⁴Office of Management and Budget, *Fiscal Year 2013: Cuts, Consolidations, and Savings: Budget of the U.S. Government*, p. 26. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2013/assets/ccs.pdf> (Downloaded August 28, 2012)

released a 60-day study earlier this summer that determined that the Laboratory can maintain its plutonium pit manufacturing and sustainment needs without CMRR-NF. Additionally, as a member of the Nuclear Weapons Council, the Department of Defense (DoD) acknowledged the CMRR-NF delay and is apparently adjusting its programming priorities accordingly.⁵

CMRR-NF is clearly unnecessary, and we believe that the congressional appropriators were correct to follow the Administration's lead on cutting the facility. By contrast, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees authorized funding for the facility in their FY 2013 defense bills. Notably, the House defense bill proposed taking away DOE authority over nuclear weapons facility construction projects, including CMRR-NF, and giving it to DoD. Given that the DoD lacks specific experience overseeing nuclear weapons projects of this scale, this shift of power would be inappropriate and irresponsible.

Nonetheless, a number of Senators have bypassed DOE and have written to the Secretary of Defense to express their concerns about delaying CMRR-NF.⁶ In one letter, eight senators, including Senate Armed Services Committee Ranking Member John McCain, calculated a plan to fund CMRR-NF in FY 2013. However, this plan assumes that the Armed Services Committees proposals for funding are more informed than the conclusions of the congressional appropriators, who have been following the development of this project for about a decade. In the other letter, the Senators said they believed not building CMRR-NF was a "high risk option" that would adversely affect national security. We believe the Senators' concerns are not fully informed by the facts.

Given that experts throughout the Administration are putting their support behind delaying CMRR-NF, and given that the NNSA has said viable alternatives exist for the brand-new facility, we find these congressional attempts to fund this boondoggle alarming. To spend almost \$6 billion on a facility the country cannot afford and does not need would be a serious mistake.

Sincerely,



Danielle Brian
Executive Director

cc: Thomas P. D'Agostino, Under Secretary for Nuclear Security and Administrator of National Nuclear Security Administration

⁵ Memorandum from Frank Kendall, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics to Members of the Nuclear Weapons Council, regarding Joint Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration and Department of Defense Programmatic Realignment, March 27, 2012.
http://lasg.org/budget/NWC_post-FY13_budget_request.pdf. (Downloaded August 28, 2012)

⁶ Letter from U.S. Senators Jon Kyl, Ben Nelson, John McCain, Joe Lieberman, et al., to Leon E. Panetta, Secretary of Defense, about the delay of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement-Nuclear Facility, June 29, 2012.

Letter from U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall to Leon E. Panetta, Secretary of Defense, about the delay of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement-Nuclear Facility, July 26, 2012.

Leon E. Panetta, Secretary of Defense
Dr. Ashton Carter, Deputy Secretary of Defense
Dr. Frank Kendall, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics
Dr. James Miller, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Admiral James Winnefeld Jr., Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
General Robert Kehler, Commander, U.S. STRATCOM
Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Members of the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies
Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee
Members of the House Armed Services Committee
The Honorable Kelly Ayotte
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
The Honorable Bob Corker
The Honorable James M. Inhofe
The Honorable Johnny Isakson
The Honorable Jon Kyl
The Honorable Joe Lieberman
The Honorable John McCain
The Honorable Ben Nelson
The Honorable Tom Udall