



THE WEST VALLEY CITIZEN TASK FORCE

May 4, 2012

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate
478 Russell
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Higgins
United States House of Representatives
2459 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thomas Reed
United States House of Representatives
1037 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
United States House of Representatives
1711 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Adequate Funding for West Valley Demonstration Project

Dear Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, Congressman Higgins, Congressman Reed and Congresswoman Hochul,

The West Valley Citizen Task Force (CTF) has been serving the community for fifteen years and will continue to do so because we are adamant in our advocacy for a complete cleanup at the site of the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP). Once again, as Congress takes up the annual federal budget we find ourselves having to request appropriate funding from the federal government to live up to its commitments to our community to cleanup this former nuclear reprocessing site. The unique characteristics of this area demand that extreme care be taken to protect residents of the Buffalo/Niagara and Southern Ontario Region now and in the future. Accomplishing such an undertaking requires a commitment of adequate funding as each phase of the cleanup is completed and maintaining the necessary high skill jobs in the local community.

The U. S. Department of Energy (DOE) Record of Decision (ROD) of 2010 set forth a two part phased decisionmaking process for the decommissioning of the WVDP. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) planned for Phase 1 work to be complete by 2020. On November 10, 2010, in a letter to the DOE Office of Environmental Management, the CTF expressed concern about proposed funding for Phase 1 and the need for assurance of sufficient and stable funding for Phase 2. We reiterate that concern now.

Site managers have stated that the “min-safe” costs for the site (maintaining the property, keeping the lights on, etc.) amount to \$20 million a year. An allocation of \$50 million for FY 2013 as called for in the President’s Budget leaves only \$30 million for cleanup, a relatively small amount to accomplish any meaningful portion of a huge project. With the estimated cost of over \$750 million for Phase 1, the math alone demonstrates that allocations of \$50-\$60 million a year would result in a ten-year project requiring up to 15 or more years to complete. Meanwhile, the project site footprint would remain largely the same, requiring continued monitoring and maintenance which will entail an *additional \$200 million* in cleanup expenses due to the delayed work in Phase 1. . In addition, Phase 2, with its more dangerous components, would be delayed, resulting in even more accumulated costs and risks. WVDP has proven with the vitrification of liquid high-level wastes that it can complete complex tasks with adequate funding.

When American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds were made available, the CTF did not object to the corresponding reduction in base funding. In fact, the CTF agreed to allow diversion of some of the money allocated to WVDP to the Brookhaven Labs in order to facilitate completion of a DOE project there. It was the CTF’s expectation that once that work was completed, funds would be available to accomplish the goals of the WVDP ROD. Instead, as the ARRA funds were depleted, the base funds remained at the reduced level and have continued in that range since then.

As stewards of our economic and environmental future, now it is time for the federal government to take responsibility for its portion of the WVDP cleanup, beginning with finishing Phase 1 within ten years as planned. Funding must be increased to cover a sizeable portion of the cleanup each year, or eventual costs will continue to rise with little to show for the money expended. In addition, the footprint will not be reduced in size and money will be wasted maintaining buildings scheduled for demolition.

Adequate funding can facilitate planning, but no amount of planning can guarantee funding. This is the job of Congress: to facilitate planning by guaranteeing funding for such an important project. We

strongly encourage you to break this annual cycle of uncertainty for the community, save money in the long-term through its wise use now, and reduce the risk to our people and the environment by putting in place, as has been done for other sites, a multi-year budget of at least \$75 million per year to accomplish Phase 1 as scheduled.

The CTF looks forward to your support, a favorable response and continued diligent attention to a proper cleanup at the West Valley site. Meanwhile, we thank you in advance for anything you can do to increase funding levels to a point where this project can move faster toward that end.

Sincerely,

Deborah Aument *Frank Aument*

Christopher C. Leroy

P. J. Ryan

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Joe A. A.

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Eric W. Wohler

Copy:

- Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
- Francis J. Murray, Jr. President and CEO, NYSERDA
- Paul Bembia, Director WVSMP, NYSERDA
- David Huizenga, Senior Manager for DOE Environmental Management
- Bryan Bower, Director WVDP, DOE