

Candidate Tracy Mitrano says Rep. Tom Reed could do more for West Valley cleanup

• By RICK MILLER, Olean Times Herald

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Tracy Mitrano

Democratic congressional candidate Tracy Mitrano said Tuesday that U.S. Rep. Tom Reed hadn't done enough to secure sufficient funding for the West Valley nuclear cleanup.

Federal and state governments have spent more than \$2 billion on the cleanup so far. Mitrano, of Penn Yan, said studies show the cost for a full cleanup range from \$6 billion to \$12 billion.

The West Valley plant was developed by Nuclear Fuel Services in the 1960s to reprocess spent nuclear fuel rods. Located in the town of Ashford, the plant closed in 1972 for environmental upgrades. It never reopened. The West Valley Demonstration Act of 1980 signaled the start of the cleanup of the site.

In a press call with reporters, Mitrano said the \$10 million additional West Valley funding Reed sought from the Department of Energy, bring annual appropriations to \$75 million.

"It's not enough to solve the problem," she insisted. "He is simply not doing enough for the cleanup of this site."

The site sits near creeks that feed Cattaraugus Creek which empties into Lake Erie. The Great Lakes contain one-sixth of the world's fresh water.

OLEAN TIMES HERALD

Mitrano also noted traces of radioactive waste from West Valley have already traveled to hot spots in Lake Ontario sediment.

Reed or the next representative from the 23rd Congressional District must “make sure this site is adequately funded for complete remediation,” Mitrano said.

“We need a congressman who can get a good number and the appropriation to clean that site up,” Mitrano said. “There’s a lot of anger for failure to obtain adequate funding.”

Reed, who was asked about Mitrano’s criticism during an afternoon press call with reporters, said she “is out of touch” on the issue.

“She’s not aware of the situation. We have worked proudly with West Valley. To indicate that \$75 million is not enough” is wrong.

ON ANOTHER ISSUE, Mitrano, criticized Reed for failing to stand up to President Donald Trump when he says or does something unsettling. She cited recent issues with tariffs as well as the criticisms heaped on Trump after the death of Republican Sen. John McCain over the weekend.

Mitrano said she was “deeply embarrassed and ashamed” over Trump’s disrespect of McCain, as the president waited two days to issue a statement acknowledging the passing of the honored statesman, who had spent more than five years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. Additionally, the American flag atop the White House was only lowered to half-staff from Saturday evening to Sunday at midnight, and was at full staff Monday morning as nearly every other flag in the capital appeared to still be lowered. The White House flag was lowered back to half-staff by mid-afternoon, and according to the president will stay at that position until McCain is interred.

The country needs to “honor the people who have served in the military,” Mitrano said. Her father and his four brothers fought in World War II, she said. They were “the Italian version of The Sullivans.” No one represents the military “better than John McCain.”