



# THE WEST VALLEY CITIZEN TASK FORCE

January 22, 2014

Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Richard C. Shelby, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Diane Feinstein, Chairwoman Senate, Subcommittee on Energy & Water  
Development  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Senator Lamar Alexander, Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Energy & Water  
Development  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

RE: **West Valley Demonstration Project**

Dear Senators Mikulski, Shelby, Feinstein and Alexander,

The West Valley Citizen Task Force (CTF) is a citizen advisory group that has been meeting continuously since 1997 to address issues at the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) in Western New York. The WVDP was created by a special act of Congress in 1980. The site hosts the *only* commercial nuclear waste reprocessing facility to operate in the United States. The site piloted clean up technologies now used elsewhere in the Department of Energy complex.

The Citizen Task Force fully understands that all facets of the federal government are facing unprecedented budget pressures. We also firmly believe that federal funds should be used wisely with a goal of reducing long-term expenditures. Unfortunately, without your help the clean up of the WVDP site has the potential to cost the taxpayers *significantly more* rather than less. In addition, the recent

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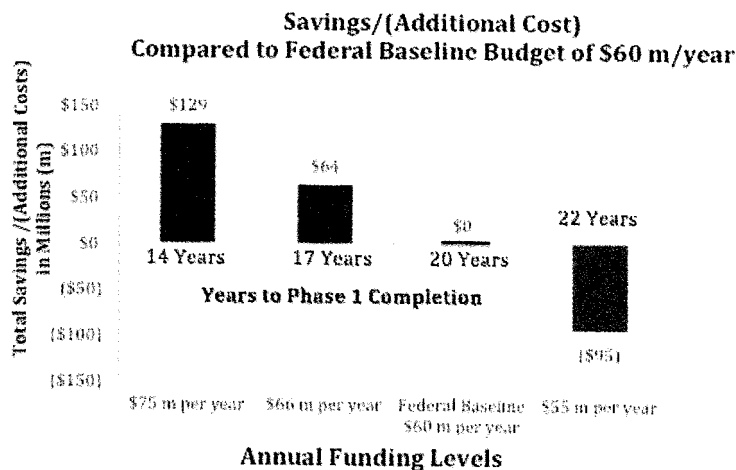
lack of stable funding impacts the workforce at the site; rather retaining and expanding the skilled workforce to do more targeted work, workers lost through attrition have not been replaced because of funding uncertainty.

A few brief points to note:

- The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for West Valley took almost **30 years** to result in a *Phased Decision Making FEIS* which delays crucial decisions up to an additional 10 years.
- The FEIS projected that Phase 1 work would be complete within ten years at an even funding level of \$75 million per year for a total cost of \$750 million. The Decontamination and Decommissioning Work was projected to cost \$550 million with “Min-Safe” costs related to maintenance, operations and security of \$200 million at the rate of \$20 million annually.
- The Phase 1 Decommissioning and Facility Disposition Contract for clean up over 7 years was executed on the basis of \$60 million per year in funding.

Recent annual funding requests have varied from \$50 million to \$60 million. These funding levels will add significant additional costs and take many more years to complete the work. The recent baseline budget of \$60 million is inadequate. A simple comparison, based on information provided by DOE, clearly demonstrates that funding at the \$75 million level anticipated in the EIS is the most fiscally prudent and environmentally responsible course of action. **Annual funding at the \$75 million level for Phase 1 will save the taxpayers \$129 million.**

Delaying completion of Phase 1 work will necessarily cause Phase 2 work, whatever that will be, to be delayed. While the risk may be lower now, it has not been eliminated. Two unlined and erosion prone burial grounds contain a significant inventory of long-lived radionuclides and a mixture of other hazardous material. Although the final determination with respect to this is a Phase 2 decision, in the interim the burial grounds are at risk from



the increasing frequency and duration of severe weather events. Downstream from the burial grounds are the Great Lakes which contain 21% of the *world's* surface freshwater supply. Contamination of these water bodies from a release would be catastrophic not only for the people and environment in the region but also for the two countries involved, the United States and Canada.

In the current fiscal year WVDP has benefited from a confluence of events. The FY '13 President's

proposed budget for WVDP was approximately \$50 million – an entirely inadequate amount. The FY '12 funding was supplemented by \$6 million through the Reed-Higgins amendment and this was carried over into FY '13. As an unexpected result of the sequestration process, the baseline budget for FY '13 was the FY '12 budget of approximately \$60 million, rather than approximately \$50 million. The result is that \$9.93 million in supplemental funding became available late last spring.

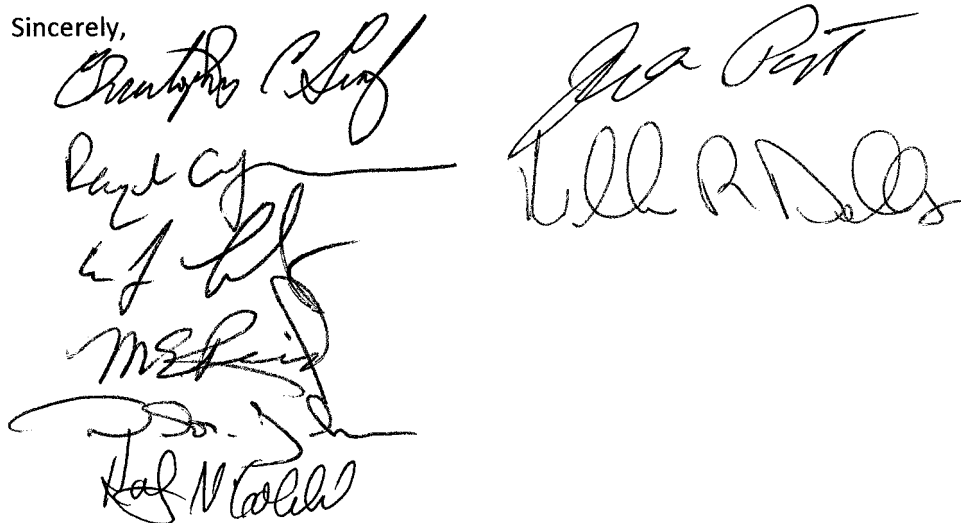
Between May and November of last year the unexpected supplemental funds were used to accelerate work on facility preparation and demolition, to prepare and ship more waste off-site and to purchase equipment and materials. The Citizen Task Force received a presentation on the utilization of these supplemental funds at a recent meeting. Two clear examples stood out that highlight the point we have been making that spending wisely now saves money in the long-term, namely:

- The replacement and demolition of the Environmental Lab, costing \$800,000, will result in a 15% savings in energy costs annually.
- The site contractor was able to purchase a trackhoe for facility demolition. The equipment cost \$710,000 and will save about \$1 million compared to the planned five-year lease.

Last year in particular WVDP demonstrated it should be considered a wise investment. It demonstrated that it can use funds to accomplish work that will yield long-term benefits including reduced risk to human and environmental health and reduced costs that will allow the long-term wise use of funds for clean up rather than maintenance and monitoring.

West Valley should not be considered a small site, a low risk site, or a problem site. Rather it should be considered a wise investment. It is a wise investment because funds spent now will save funds in the future and bring the site closer to closure. It is an opportunity because action now will reduce or eliminate future risk to a global resource of fresh water. It is an opportunity where DOE can pilot new techniques and technologies on exhumation and other issues at a complex site and use the lessons to more effectively and expeditiously clean up other sites within the complex.

Sincerely,

The block contains several handwritten signatures in black ink. On the left side, there are five distinct signatures stacked vertically. On the right side, there are two larger, more prominent signatures, one above the other. The signatures are cursive and vary in style and legibility.

Members of the West Valley Citizen Task Force

Copy:

Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Governor

Honorable Charles Schumer, U.S. Senate

Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Senate

Honorable Tom Reed, NY 23<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District, Olean Office

Honorable Brian Higgins, NY 26<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, Buffalo Office

Honorable, Chris Collins, NY 27<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, Lancaster Office

Honorable Louise M. Slaughter, NY 25<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, Rochester Office

Honorable Dan Maffei, NY 24<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, Syracuse Office

David Huizenga, Senior Advisor, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management,  
U.S. DOE

Bryan Bower, Director, West Valley Demonstration Project, U.S. DOE

John B. Rhodes, President and CEO, NYSERDA

Paul Bembia, Director, West Valley Site Management Program, NYSERDA