

Ashford urges Congress to increase DOE's Environmental Management funding

ASHFORD — A broad coalition of labor, community and industry organizations has sent a letter urging Congress to provide a one-time \$7.25 billion increase in funding for the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management program to some of the regions hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Among those communities is the town of Ashford, home of the [West Valley Demonstration Project](#).

The funding, which could be spent in the near future, will help reignite the national economy, assist in reviving small businesses and create thousands of new jobs. At the same time, it could reduce one of the federal government's largest liabilities, accelerate the national defense mission and build a nuclear workforce for the future.

The [West Valley Demonstration Project](#) focuses on the cleanup and containment of radioactive waste left behind after the abandonment of a commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing plant operating from 1965 to 1980. The project was created by an Act of Congress in 1980 and is directed to be a cooperative effort between the United States Department of Energy and the [New York State Energy Research and Development Authority](#).

The letter was signed by 17 organizations including the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, North America's Building Trades Unions, the Energy Communities Alliance (ECA) And Energy, Technology and Environmental Business Association (ETEBA).

"We have worked to improve coordination among federal, state and local government leaders, contractors, unions, communities and economic development entities, resulting in real progress," the letter states. "However, we must remain committed to reducing one of the country's largest

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environmental and financial liabilities to drive the innovations and technological advancements for America's future.”

According to the letter, DOE can successfully manage increased funding and leverage it for future economic development as it has in the past:

“The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) allowed DOE to speed up decontamination and demolition at numerous sites and award more contracts to private industry and small businesses to hasten the clean-up of legacy nuclear waste. During ARRA, EM proved a worthy investment: the program received \$6 billion and was able to reduce the program's future financial liabilities by \$13 billion through the acceleration of cleanup work. EM contractors alone hired over 20,000 new workers, putting them back to work to reduce the overall cleanup complex footprint by 688 square miles while strengthening local economies.”

The letter identified dozens of high-impact projects that EM could initiate and complete with the \$7.25 billion for the Hanford Site, Idaho Cleanup Project, Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, Los Alamos Legacy Cleanup, Nevada, Oak Ridge, Paducah, Portsmouth, Savannah River Site and West Valley.

For more information, please contact ECA Program Manager MacKenzie Kerr at mackenziek@energyca.org or (202) 828-2410.