Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Visclosky:

As lawmakers who represent communities and states that are home to the federal government’s nuclear waste sites, we write regarding the needs of the Department of Energy’s Environmental Management (EM) program.

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2012 Energy and Water Appropriations we request your assistance in achieving a responsible level of funding for the cleanup of these sites created by our nation’s World War II and Cold War era nuclear weapons production program. According to historical needs of the sites and the Department of Energy’s calculations, the request for the Environmental Management program for Fiscal Year 2012 is $6.1 billion.

We are acutely aware of the budget crisis facing our nation. Fiscal realities have changed, however, the federal government’s legal obligations to clean up its defense nuclear waste have not. This is not about new or expanded government — it’s about meeting legal commitments that the federal government has already agreed to. As you know, the federal government has very specific cleanup milestones that it must meet each year in order to avoid legal action. The funding level for next year will impact not only Fiscal Year 2012 milestones — but also the Department’s ability to meet already agreed to milestones into the future.

In the final agreement on Fiscal Year 2011, funding for nuclear waste cleanup was reduced by $197 million and we recognize that the House Appropriations Committee will face very difficult choices when it comes to determining funding levels for next year. However, we believe that a distinction can and should be made between optional government activities and existing legal commitments like nuclear waste cleanup.

While funding levels for almost all federal programs are predicted to decrease in Fiscal Year 2012, we look forward to working with you to ensure that the nuclear cleanup program has the resources necessary to protect the environment, keep skilled workers on the job and uphold the government’s legal commitments to the states.

Thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress

Michael K. Simpson
Member of Congress
Ed Whitfield
Member of Congress

Norm Dicks
Member of Congress

Jean Schmidt
Member of Congress

Steven R. Rothman
Member of Congress

Stevan Pearce
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

David G. Reichert
Member of Congress

Jay Inslee
Member of Congress

Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
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Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Ben Ray Lujan
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Rush Holt
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John J. Duncan, Jr.
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Jim McDermott
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Scott DesJarlais
Member of Congress