

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 19, 2017

The Honorable Rick Perry
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Perry:

We appreciate the swift action taken by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), contractors, and first responders to protect workers, the public, and environment on May 9, 2017, when workers at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in the State of Washington observed a subsidence over Tunnel 1 adjacent to the Plutonium-Uranium Extraction Plant (PUREX). We are thankful no one was hurt, and that there was no harm to the public or environment. However, this event highlighted the nuclear waste cleanup, environmental remediation, and radioactive and toxic hazards that must still be addressed at the Hanford site. It is clear aging infrastructure and the waste contained within it continues to present a threat to the health and safety of the Tri-Cities community, the Columbia River, Washington state, and our nation. Strong and predictable funding is critical to continued cleanup progress and to the federal government fulfilling its legal and moral obligation to remediate the Hanford site. We also invite you to tour the Hanford site, which will provide you with a unique understanding of the challenges facing Hanford.

DOE's Richland Operations Office (RL) is responsible for all non-tank waste cleanup activities throughout the Hanford site including soil and groundwater remediation, facility decontamination and decommissioning, stabilization and disposition of nuclear materials and spent fuel, and the disposition of non-tank waste. Through strong commitment from the federal government, State of Washington, Washington Congressional Delegation, and the Tri-Cities community, RL has made significant progress when it comes to cleanup along the Columbia River Corridor. Six of nine nuclear reactors have been placed in Interim Safe Storage and the surrounding areas remediated, and a seventh reactor – the B Reactor – has been cleaned up and is now part of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. In the 300 Area, the majority of the buildings have been decontaminated and demolished, with the 324 Building remaining as one of the final projects. Demolition of the Plutonium Finishing Plant, which was once the highest risk nuclear facility at the Hanford site, is to be completed later this year. In addition, progress has been made in groundwater remediation through the 200 West Pump and Treat Facility in the Central Plateau and pump and treat facilities along the Columbia River.

Despite this hard work, much work remains within the RL mission to clean up the non-tank waste that was created by over 40 years of nuclear weapons production at the Hanford site to help the United States win World War II, and later the Cold War. Tunnel 1 at PUREX involved in last week's events, which contains 780 cubic yards of waste in eight rail cars including highly radioactive materials and miscellaneous contaminated equipment, is just one example of the

many facilities that remain to be decontaminated and demolished. In fact, RL has a long list of cleanup projects on the Central Plateau, including about 1,000 waste sites, 500 facilities, and contaminated soil and groundwater – much of which is highly contaminated with radioactive and toxic waste and poses risk to workers, the public, and environment – that still needs to be remediated.

As you work to finalize the Administration’s Fiscal Year 2018 budget request, we urge you to take into consideration the cleanup work that remains within the RL mission and provide strong funding levels to reduce risks, long-term costs, and meet Tri-Party Agreement milestones. Previous administrations and Congress have repeatedly supported the legal and moral obligation of the federal government to clean up the Hanford site, and we urge you to continue this important work to protect health and safety.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress