

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2015

The Honorable Ernest Moniz
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
100 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Moniz;

The Ohio delegation has repeatedly urged this Administration to present a fully funded, comprehensive plan for the decontamination and decommissioning (D&D) operations at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Piketon, Ohio. This environmental clean-up and restoration work employs nearly 2,000 individuals. It is critically important to Southern Ohio, and it has struggled to receive the attention needed to ensure financial stability, fulfill the federal obligation to the community, and sustain productivity at the site.

We are disappointed and dismayed that instead of increasing, or even maintaining, funding for the site, the President's budget proposals routinely underfund the cleanup work in Piketon. The President's most recent budget request for fiscal year 2016 proposes to cut D&D funding by 17.6 percent or \$48.6 million below the fiscal year 2015 levels provided for by Congress.

The result of underfunding this clean-up project is instability, inefficiency, and reduced effectiveness. Some have estimated that the unstable economic environment results in annual lost productivity of \$120 million, caused in part by the contractor's inability to stick to a multi-year plan. Last year, for example, over 700 workers received notices that their jobs might be terminated before Christmas. Fortunately, these layoffs were averted when Congress intervened.

We had hoped that by partnering with you and the Administration on a sustained leveled program, the uncertainty experienced by the Piketon community these last few years would not be repeated, but the continued budget cuts and the recent secretarial determination regarding uranium transfer for cleanup services at Piketon make a partnership nearly impossible.

In recent years, the D&D operations at Piketon have been supplemented by the sale of excess uranium. Your previous secretarial determination covered transfers up to the equivalent of 2,055 metric tons of natural uranium (MTU) per year, in natural uranium hexafluoride provided to contractors for cleanup services at the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. The 2015 determination, however, reduces covered transfers down to 1,600 MTU for the 2016 calendar year, creating a shortfall of 455 MTU.

While we are thankful for the assurances from your staff that the new transfer levels will not have an impact on employment at the site in the 2015 calendar year, the 1,600 MTU level for 2016 could create a significant funding gap next year should uranium prices remain where they are today or fall. This will reignite the uncertainty that surrounds the project and it runs counter to the efforts of the Ohio delegation in Congress.

On May 1, 2015, the House of Representatives approved the fiscal year 2016 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill which provided full funding for the cleanup work at Portsmouth. Specifically, the bill provided \$213 million for D&D operations, which surpassed the Obama Administration's request by \$48 million. Unfortunately, DOE's latest Determination could undo the progress being made by Congress in keeping this project on track by reducing a critical funding source for the D&D work by tens of millions of dollars. Clearly, such a reduction in funding is not compatible with the Administration's stated goal of completing the work by 2024.

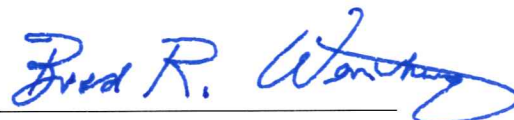
We respectfully request that DOE explain, in detail, how workforce disruptions will be avoided in 2016 given the potential funding shortfalls described above.

Clean-up and restoration work is critically important to southern Ohio, and merits your immediate attention. The people of Southern Ohio worked extremely hard for the national security interests of the U.S. during the Cold War, and we owe it to them to complete the D&D work at Piketon as quickly as possible.

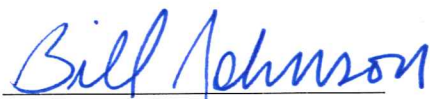
Sincerely,



Rob Portman
U.S. Senator



Brad Wenstrup
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress