

To: West Valley Citizen Task Force
From: Melinda Holland, Task Force Facilitator
Subject: Summary of the March 5, 2004, Meeting Between Congressional Staff and CTF Members
Date: March 17, 2004

If you have questions or comments regarding the upcoming meeting or about this summary, please contact Melinda Holland at (828) 894-5963 or mholland@c-solutions.org.

CTF Attendees

Attending in-person were: Mark Mitskovski (for Larry Rubin), Ray Vaughan, Joe Patti, Mike Hutchinson, Paul Piciulo, and John Pfeffer.

CTF Member attending via telephone: Bill King, (and Melinda Holland as facilitator).

Congressional Staff Attendees

Attending in-person were: Scott Sroka (Senator Schumer), Jim Keane (Senator Clinton), Ron Hayes (Representative Quinn)

Attending via telephone: Bob Van Wicklin (Representative Houghton), Mark Maier (Representative Reynolds), and Sally Schaeffer (Representative Slaughter).

Meeting Summary

The meeting between Congressional staff and West Valley Citizen Task Force (CTF) members was hosted by Scott Sroka at Senator Schumer's Buffalo office. The meeting began with Congressional staff explaining that Senator Schumer and Senator Clinton are working together closely on West Valley issues and funding for 2005. Both Senators and Representative Houghton have recently written letters to DOE Secretary Abraham. The Washington D.C. staff of the Western New York Congressional delegation meet regularly to discuss West Valley issues and are working toward resolution of those issues.

Task Force members explained the CTF's concerns about:

- DOE's preferred alternative,
- the lingering impasse between NYSERDA and DOE,
- financial impacts on the local community as the budget continues to be reduced,
- the need for economic development assistance,
- opposition to legislation to change the definition of "waste incidental to reprocessing" (WIR)

- protection of the large down-stream fresh water resources

Congressional staff explained that they are working with the state of New York to see if additional legislation is needed to resolve issues regarding the West Valley site. New York is to provide its “ideal” draft legislative language to the delegation with recommendations on how it can be paid for. A NYSERDA representative explained that his agency is working with Governor Pataki’s office and have developed principles regarding what New York believes needs to be done. NYSERDA’s President Peter Smith will explain these principles to the CTF at its March 17th meeting.

Congressional staff members expressed concern that DOE’s lack of response to letters from Representative Houghton, Senator Schumer and Senator Clinton, along with the proposed budget cuts and DOE’s preferred alternative indicate that DOE intends to walk away from the West Valley site. A Senate staffer mentioned that the delegation and the Washington D.C. staff believe that legislation will be needed to assure a full cleanup. But legislation must be reasonable if it is to be sold to the rest of Congress. How the new legislation will be funded is a difficult and key issue needing creative solutions. He also noted that at a time when the entire federal government is cutting budgets it may be difficult to spend billions to exhume high-level waste (HLW) tanks.

CTF members suggested some possible funding options including financing cleanup over a long period of time, performing long-term stewardship until funding is available for a full cleanup, and deciding responsibility for funding based on waste management areas. A CTF member also suggested that transferring ownership of the site to DOE is a concern, and that transfer of ownership of the waste would be preferable as it keeps New York in an oversight role. Other CTF members suggested creation of a new West Valley Demonstration Project to develop and prove technology for exhuming HLW Tanks and cleanup of other waste management areas - this technology could then be applied at other DOE sites. They asserted that the West Valley site’s small scale makes it ideal for a demonstration project. Another CTF member noted that a demonstration project proposal would need to show that it can be done safely and be affordable, especially given the large number of tanks in the DOE complex.

Congressional staff suggested that the CTF consider and respond to NYSERDA’s legislative principles (as presented on March 17th), then the Task Force and NYSERDA should give the delegation legislative language suggestions soon after the CTF’s April 21st meeting. They stated that it is too early to schedule a meeting in Washington D.C. between the delegation and the CTF, but that May might be possible. They also reminded the Task Force that a meeting with the delegation would only be for one-half hour, thus the CTF needs to be very clear on what it wants and how that can be accomplished.

Action Items

Action	Assigned To	Due Date
Present New York's legislative principles at the 3/17 CTF meeting	NYSERDA	3/17/04
CTF responds to NYSERDA's principles	CTF	4/5/04
Transmit CTF recommendations to the Congressional delegation	CTF	4/23/04