

## Schumer battles for W. Valley

By Jerry Zremski NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

Updated: 07/09/08 6:59 AM

WASHINGTON — The West Valley Demonstration Project would have to cut up to 50 jobs and slow down its work in the coming year unless Sen. Charles E. Schumer wins his battle to increase funding for the Cattaraugus County nuclear waste site.

Schumer on Tuesday urged the Senate Appropriations Committee to provide \$80 million for the project for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, up from the \$57 million suggested by President Bush, which is the level in the House version of the bill.

“With adequate funds and resources, the legacy of radioactive waste that has plagued West Valley and the surrounding communities for decades can finally be addressed,” Schumer said. “Without such funds, however, conditions at the site will further deteriorate, the cost of cleanup will increase, and the citizens of New York will continue to shoulder this decades-old burden.”

The New York Democrat made his case in a letter to the top members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which will mark up the fiscal 2009 funding bill Thursday.

The House Appropriations Committee has marked up its version of the bill for energy and water and froze West Valley funding at \$57 million.

A spokesman for West Valley Environmental Services, the contractor that operates the facility, steered questions about the possible cuts to an Energy Department official, who could not be reached to comment.

But the office of Rep. Randy Kuhl, R-Hammondsport, confirmed that the House version of the spending bill would force the project to cut up to 50 jobs and delay decontamination efforts, waste transportation and disposal, equipment purchasing and environmental monitoring. Kuhl had lobbied for the \$80 million in funding in the House bill.

The \$57 million allocated for the project in the House bill compares with \$55.5 million in the current year's budget.

Schumer failed in his efforts to get the funding level increased in the current budget, prompting an earlier round of 50 job cuts at the facility.

## **Funding for 2 projects moves forward in Senate**

**Updated: 07/11/08 6:37 AM**

WASHINGTON — Federal funding for the West Valley Demonstration Project and return of traffic to Main Street in downtown Buffalo moved forward in a key Senate committee Thursday.

The Senate Appropriations Committee allotted \$72.9 million for West Valley for fiscal 2009, which starts Oct. 1, short of the \$80 million sought by Sen. Charles

E. Schumer, but higher than the \$57 million in the House version of the bill.

The boost means the Cattaraugus County waste site may be able to stave off many of the 50 job cuts forecast under the House version of the bill.

Meanwhile, the committee approved \$1 million for the downtown Buffalo project and \$500,000 to design, purchase, and install supplemental safety measures at four railroad crossings in the Town of Hamburg.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/otherwny/story/389624.html>

## WIVB-TV News4 Buffalo, NY |Former employees of southern tier nuclear plant want answers<<Back

Former employees of southern tier nuclear plant want answers

Updated: July 11, 2008 09:52 PM EDT

(WIVB) - - Some former employees at a southerntier nuclear plant are convinced they are sick from working there.

Their common thread is that they worked at the West Valley Demonstration Project in the 90's, and now they're devloping cancer at a young age, but are getting no compensation.

Chris Fallon, worked at West Valley, said, "There's no history of cancer in my family," and yet, by age 35, Chris Fallon was diagnosed with two forms of cancer. He didn't really connect it to his work at West Valley until his co-workers developed cancer.

This small group has just started meeting monthly and is sending signed petitions to members of Congress.

A West Valley spokesman says the Department of Energy has always tried to keep workers exposure to radiation well below the limits set by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Bob Timmel, West Valley employee, said, "Well, there's actually some documentation out there that even low doses of radiation can still affect you." Timmel even has a doctors note saying that his cancer came from his work at West Valley, but he was denied compensation.

One of the Centers for Disease Control known as NIOSH is working with about 57 cancer clients from West Valley, but historically only about 30% of the clients who seek compensation actually get compensated.

Story by George Richert (WIVB)

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# Einach Expresses Concern Over Senate West Valley Plan

Written by Glenn Gramigna, Editor

Friday, 11 July 2008

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**AS SENATE FALLS \$7 MILLION SHORT ON EXPECTED APPROPRIATION TO CLEAN UP WEST VALLEY, COALITION ON WEST VALLEY NUCLEAR WASTES CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR JUDY EINACH DECRIES UNDERFUNDING...CALLS EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR PLANTS "UNCONSCIONABLE!"**

As a plan to provide 2009 fiscal year federal funding for the West Valley Demonstration Project moved forward in Congress, a local spokesperson is pointing out that the \$72.9 million appropriation recently approved by a US Senate Committee falls short of what is needed. In fact, though the funding passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee represents an improvement over the \$57 million already oked by the House of Representatives, it is considerably less than the \$80 million sought by Senator Charles Schumer.

"I'm trying to be positive about this," said Einach in an exclusive interview with NewWNYPolitics.com. "The fact that the Senate Appropriations Committee added \$15.9 million in additional funding over what is in the House bill is a good thing. But, the fact that the federal government continues to underfund the clean-up of the West Valley Nuclear site is unacceptable."

Einach seems especially concerned about what this pattern reveals about America's current priorities.

"What this shows is the nation's weak commitment to dealing with the problem of nuclear waste," she added.

What could this mean for proposals made by Senator McCain and others to expand the number of nuclear energy facilities in America?

"Until we work out a solution to the problem of dealing with nuclear waste," Einach declared, "it is unconscionable for us to even consider building any more nuclear plants either in our country or in the rest of the world."

From NewWNYPolitics.com

## Restore West Valley funding

**Schumer faces a budget challenge in bid to combat cuts to nuclear waste project**

**Updated: 07/15/08 6:37 AM**

Sen. Charles E. Schumer deserves all of the local political support he can get for his push to restore funding cuts that will impact continuing cleanup work at the West Valley Demonstration Site, this area's primary radioactive waste problem spot. Longtime West Valley project champion Rep. Thomas M. Reynolds is retiring from the House of Representatives this year, and Schumer's continued shouldering of that burden on the Senate side is welcome.

Federal funding for the Cattaraugus County nuclear waste site has been cut nearly in half over the past three years, and the Bush administration's proposed cut to \$57 million this year was backed by the House despite efforts by Rep. John R. "Randy" Kuhl Jr., R-Hammondsport. The full Senate Appropriations Committee, though, now has approved \$72.9 million in federal funding and the bill will be sent to the Senate floor. If it passes there, the funding bill goes to a joint House-Senate conference committee to settle the final number.

Without the Senate increase, 50 jobs are threatened and work for the coming year will be slowed — just as a core task force is making progress on a plan for still-unfunded state and federal cleanup work that could ensure needed progress despite differences between the state and federal governments over site responsibility.

Any roadblock to progress stemming from funding cutbacks is unacceptable. West Valley still has highly contaminated radioactive waste on site, contaminated buildings that have to be removed and a dangerous Strontium-90 groundwater plume that needs to be contained after the source of the contamination is removed.

Current budget levels have fallen \$23 million short of the necessary funding to keep the West Valley Demonstration Project on track, making Schumer's effort to get \$80 million in federal funds for the project all the more vital.

Schumer has acted appropriately in picking up the baton on this issue. In a statement, he noted that the Senate was able to restore administration cuts last year and plans to do the same again this year. It's important that it does.

The 28-year cleanup effort at West Valley hasn't come close to finishing the \$2.2 billion job.

New York State, which has its own cleanup and containment operations at the site, has spent nearly \$242 million and

the project last year marked a milestone by shipping thousands of containers of cemented low-level radioactive waste off site. But the federal Department of Energy has no options yet for off-site transfer of the high-level radioactive waste it has solidified into glass logs, and radioactive process buildings from the original federally encouraged nuclear fuels reprocessing project remain.

That effort will take state-federal agreements, expertise and development of new technologies, time — and money.

The money part is the job of Congress and the White House. Schumer, who helped secure restoration of \$78.8 million in federal funding last year, remains on the right path — even if the vitally important cleanup project just off Route 219 risks going off track for lack of federal resources and commitment.

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## NYSERDA to increase security on Ashford property

By RENEE HANLEY  
*Journal Correspondent*

During the July 9 meeting of the Town of Ashford Board, Supervisor Christopher Gerwitz informed the board that he had been contacted by NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) regarding the facility's property. NYSERDA notified the Town that they plan to increase security around the perimeter of the nuclear waste site. They have become aware of people trespassing on their land and will consider pressing charges on those who enter the property without permission. NYSERDA also plans to relinquish their bulk storage warehouse on Buttermilk Road, along with 100 acres. The property would be an appropriate facility for commercial development in Ashford.

A moratorium on wind farm development is in the process of being finalized. The Wind Energies Facilities draft was distributed to

Board members. Gerwitz plans to investigate other wind farms in Western New York, including the Bliss Windpark operated by Noble Environmental Power and the Maple Ridge project near Utica, which is a Horizon Wind Energy enterprise. Both companies have expressed interest in wind farm development in the Town of Ashford. Board members will set a date to tour the farms. It was noted that the Town of Eagle has received many financial incentives from the Noble project.

Highway Supervisor Tim Engels informed the Board that the roads department has received \$105,000 for the Consolidated Local Street Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) from the State Department of Transportation. The Board plans to request that David Rivet, Cattaraugus County Department of Public Works Commissioner, attend a Town Board or Planning Board meeting in the future, to discuss the status of County Road 53 (Ashford Hollow Road) and other concerns.

The Board passed a motion to extend the moratorium regarding the placement of used manufactured housing for an additional year. New, current-year models of manufactured or modular housing are exempt from the moratorium and will be allowed on property.

The evening's agenda also included the following items:

- The Town received \$8,000 from the Justice Court Assistance Program

- The Town is still waiting for the \$15,000 grant from Senator Young for the water commission study.

- The Route 219 bridge has been repaired and weight restrictions have been lifted, which has eliminated the semi-truck traffic using Route 240 as a shortcut.

- The West Valley American Legion has requested funding of \$1,500 to replace flags, including those in the cemetery. The current allotment for the Legion is \$500.

- The next board meeting of the Town of Ashford will be Aug. 13, at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Building.

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## Corrections

**Updated: 07/22/08 6:54 AM**

An environmentally friendly roof is being considered only for one school in the Buffalo system. A story in some editions Wednesday incorrectly said seven school renovation projects in Buffalo were green roof candidates.

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Visitor escorts at the West Valley Demonstration Project site are available only for limited purposes, not recreational, according to state Energy Research and Development Authority officials. This was stated incorrectly in a June 27 report about beefed-up security.

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*The Buffalo News corrects published errors of substance. To request a correction, please notify the editor by writing to: P. O. Box 100, Buffalo, NY 14240. Or call The News at 849-4444 and ask to speak to the editor of the department in which the article was published. Or fax your request to 856-5150.*

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## Huntley dream was just too speculative

*Clean-coal technology was pricey, unproven*

**By David Robinson NEWS BUSINESS REPORTER**

**Updated: 07/20/08 7:10 AM**

At first glance, the advanced coal power plant proposed for the Huntley Station in the Town of Tonawanda seemed like a good solution to some of America's energy problems.

Use America's abundant — and relatively affordable — supply of coal to generate electricity in a groundbreaking new way that would keep the carbon dioxide that causes global warming from spewing into the atmosphere.

But the reality was far different for the Huntley Station project — and at least 11 other similar plants that had been on drawing boards across the country.

High costs, combined with still-developing technology, raised serious questions about whether the Huntley project and other proposed advanced coal power plants would be able to deliver on their high-sounding environmental promises.

And even if they did, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the cost of doing it would be prohibitively high.

“The Huntley project was, in many ways, ahead of its time,” said David Crane, the chief executive of NRG Energy, as the company and state officials pulled the plug on its proposal for a 680-megawatt power plant on Wednesday.

It wasn't just the \$2.3 billion Huntley project, either. Virginia utility regulators in April scrapped a proposed plant that would have been similar in size to Huntley because it would be too expensive. The U. S. Department of Energy in January pulled out of the so-called \$1.8 billion Future Gen project in Illinois that would have developed advanced methods to convert coal to gas and capture the plant's harmful emissions because the project's costs had nearly doubled.

Since the start of last year, utilities have pulled the plug or put on hold other advanced coal projects in states ranging from Connecticut and Florida to Wyoming and Oklahoma. Duke Energy, which is currently building an

advanced coal project in Indiana, said in May that the plant's price tag had swelled by almost 20 percent to \$2.35 billion.

Because the Huntley project was designed to be a cutting-edge advanced coal plant built on a scale never done before, it was always a risky project, both for NRG and state officials, who were being asked to provide extensive subsidies and power purchase commitments.

In the end, those risks proved to be too daunting.

"The financial and environmental risk associated with this large-scale commercial power plant is simply too great," the New York Power Authority concluded in a report issued last week.

The Huntley project, even with significant government subsidies, would have produced electricity that cost far more than the current market price. To bring those costs in line would have required additional government aid and subsidies totaling \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion in today's dollars over a 20-year period — a hurdle that ultimately proved to be a key part of the project's undoing.

The Huntley project and other advanced coal power plant proposals have gathered a lot of attention over the last few years as officials search for ways to expand electricity production without adding to the threat of global warming. The Bush administration has backed efforts to develop advanced coal technology. Presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama also have endorsed advanced coal efforts.

The Huntley project also had widespread political support, lured by the promise of 100 permanent jobs and 1,000 construction jobs. But in the end, it wasn't enough.

Coal, which is both abundant in the United States and relatively cheap, is a natural choice as a potential fuel. But coal, which already is used to produce half of the U. S. electricity supply, also has huge environmental problems, because burning it produces high levels of harmful emissions, ranging from nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide to carbon dioxide.

### **Complicated process**

That led to a focus on ways to reduce those harmful emissions by using new equipment and processes. The Huntley plant, for instance, would have used a relatively new process that turns the coal into natural gas before burning it, vastly reducing sulfur dioxide and mercury emissions.

Another major part of those efforts would involve capturing the carbon dioxide, turning it into a liquid and then injecting it more than a mile beneath the earth's surface. If all went as planned, the carbon dioxide would remain safely underground forever.

But that process likely would be expensive, and scientists aren't sure that the carbon dioxide wouldn't seep out eventually, potentially defeating the purpose of easing the global warming problem.

There also are complex legal and regulatory issues that still need to be resolved, such as who would be liable if the carbon dioxide sequestration efforts led to ground water being contaminated.

In addition, no plant has ever fully integrated the three pillars of the Huntley emissions control program — the Integrated Gasification Combined Cycle process that would burn the gasified coal, capture the carbon dioxide and then store it, NYPA officials said.

"The worst case scenario being that the plant is built, carbon capture and sequestration doesn't work, or the economics for using it fail and it is discontinued, and the plant operates anyway — emitting large volumes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere," said Walter Simpson, a spokesman for the Western New York Climate Action Coalition.

Power authority officials had the same concerns. “It is not without doubt that the combined technologies may face significant challenges to deliver the promised environmental benefits at the anticipated costs,” the Power Authority report concluded.

“This could likely result in the use of significant public financial resources for a facility that does not achieve its stated purposes and fails to meet the overall environmental goal,” the report said.

### **Jamestown project OK’d**

The Paterson administration agreed that the risks were too great — a view that it signaled last month when it threw its support — and \$7 million in aid — behind a 50-megawatt advanced coal power plant being proposed in Jamestown.

Paterson administration officials are drawn to the Jamestown project because it is less than one-tenth of the size of the proposed Huntley plant, reducing the financial commitment required, while also shrinking the amount of pollutants that the facility would generate for its carbon capture and sequestration demonstration project.

“It has a much smaller price tag and it has much less risk if it doesn’t work,” said a Paterson administration official, who spoke on the condition he not be identified.

If it does work, other advanced coal projects could build on the Jamestown experience, on an even larger scale. “The beautiful thing about Jamestown is that it’s fully scalable,” the official said.

Paterson is enthusiastic about the Jamestown project because of its potential environmental benefits, as well as the economic development benefits it could produce, particularly in job-starved upstate, said Paul DeCotis, Paterson’s deputy energy secretary.

“This has implications well beyond New York,” DeCotis said. “If its proven, with New York industry and New York intellectual know-how, we could be exporting this technology. The potential upside is enormous. The potential downside is virtually zero.”

Simpson isn’t so sure. “Given U. S. heavy reliance on coal for electricity generation, there is a need to test and develop carbon capture and sequestration technologies. But it is not clear what applications and test sites are best for conducting carbon capture and sequestration tests,” he said.

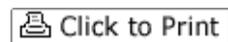
Funding also is a big hurdle for the \$285 million Jamestown project, where its backers are seeking \$100 million in federal aid.

*News staff reporter Maki Becker contributed to this story.*

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