

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Energy and Water Development  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Diane Feinstein  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Energy and Water Development  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
188 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

As you begin your work on the Fiscal Year 2017 Appropriations Bill, we write to express our strong support for the West Valley Demonstration Project (WVDP) in Ashford, New York. WVDP is a radioactive waste clean-up project within the Office of Environmental Management at the Department of Energy. WVDP receives funding from the Non-Defense Environmental Cleanup account within EM. As a result of difficult budget constraints, WVDP goes critically underfunded each year. Insufficient funding has had a variety of adverse impacts on the progress of the project: the overall cost, environmental impact, and length of time needed to clean up and decommission the facilities at the site has increased. We urge you to prioritize funding for WVDP at \$75 million in Fiscal Year 2017 in order to enable the project to progress at a more expeditious pace.

From 1966 to 1972, Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc., under contract with the State of New York, operated a commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing plant at the Western New York Nuclear Services Center. The plant reprocessed uranium and plutonium from used nuclear fuel and generated 600,000 gallons of high-level radioactive liquid. After five decades of nuclear weapons development and production and government-sponsored nuclear energy research at the plant, massive quantities of transuranic and mixed low-level waste were left at the site, and the residue includes millions of gallons of contaminated soil and water from those research activities. In 1980, Congress passed the West Valley Demonstration Project Act, authorizing the Department of Energy (DOE) to use the site to develop a method for removing the 600,000 gallons of radioactive waste. In addition, it required the Department to decontaminate and decommission the facilities used in that effort.

In 2008, the Department of Energy issued an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which established a phased process for removal of the waste. The EIS projected that Phase 1 of the cleanup could be completed within ten years with an annual budget of \$75 million. However, each year, funding for the project since the EIS was issued has fallen short of the \$75 million required. In addition, a total of \$20 million per year is required for utilities, worker salaries, and other expenses so that decontamination work may continue. This amount must be spent regardless, and therefore, the longer the project is underfunded, the more money the project will

require in the long run. With this in mind, we are requesting a total of \$75 million within the Non-Defense Environmental Cleanup account in the Office of Environmental Management for the West Valley Demonstration Project.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. A funding level of \$75 million will allow the Department of Energy to effectively and expeditiously clean up hazardous sites within the complex and will be the best way to address time sensitive environmental concerns. It is absolutely imperative that we prioritize the complete cleanup of the West Valley site. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide more information in support of this request.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

**Senator's Name:** Charles Schumer

**Priority:** \_\_\_ of \_\_\_

**Title of Request:** West Valley Demonstration Project

**Agency:** Department of Energy

**Account:** Non-Defense Environmental Cleanup

**Program or Activity:** The West Valley Demonstration Project

**Amount Requested by the Senator:** \$75,000,000

**Amount in the President's Budget Request for FY17:** \$63,628,000

**Amount included in FY16 Conference Bill:** \$61,804,000

**Senator's staff contact (including direct line):**

Oumou Ly, 4-7425

**Brief Description and Justification:**

From 1966 to 1972, Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc., under contract with the State of New York, operated a commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing plant at the Western New York Nuclear Services Center. The plant reprocessed uranium and plutonium from used nuclear fuel and generated 600,000 gallons of high-level radioactive liquid. After five decades of nuclear weapons development and production and government-sponsored nuclear energy research at the plant, massive quantities of transuranic and mixed low-level waste were left at the site, and the residue includes millions of gallons of contaminated soil and water from those research activities. As a result of difficult budget constraints, WVDP goes critically underfunded each year. Insufficient funding has had a variety of adverse impacts on the progress of the project: the overall cost, environmental impact, and length of time needed to clean up and decommission the facilities at the site has increased.