



July 8, 2025

The Honorable Christopher A. Wright
Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington DC 20585

Dear Secretary Wright,

Our organizations welcome the momentum you have created around new nuclear development in the U.S. There are many things the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) can do to advance the efficient use of nuclear energy and carry out its energy dominance and national security missions.

We are writing to request a meeting with you to discuss how we can best support the Administration’s efforts in one critical area—the restoration of a highly functioning program to meet DOE’s legal responsibility to manage and dispose of the nation’s commercial and legacy defense spent nuclear fuel (SNF) and high-level radioactive waste (HLW).¹ Doing so would result in an immense savings to the U.S. taxpayers. The remaining federal financial liabilities for inaction are estimated today between \$37.6 billion and \$44.5 billion for commercial SNF,² while the liability for the Department’s inability to remove its own legacy HLW and SNF from DOE sites was estimated in FY 2023 at \$23 billion³ and growing. Moreover, continued inaction on SNF and HLW will impair the ability of the country to carry out vital cleanup and national security missions and may inhibit new nuclear development.

It has been forty-two years since Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act establishing a national program for the management and disposal of SNF and HLW, and much has been learned about what constitutes an effective SNF/HLW program. Recent successes in Finland, Canada, Switzerland, and Sweden—nations actively pursuing SNF/HLW solutions with technologies first advanced in the U.S.—highlight the tremendous opportunity that exists for refreshing our own program.

¹ SNF and HLW are currently stored at over 100 sites in 39 states across the country. Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. 2024 Spent Nuclear Fuel and Reprocessing Waste Inventory Report. [\[Report\]](#)

² U.S. Department of Energy. (2024, November 19) “*The Department of Energy Nuclear Waste Fund’s Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Statement Audit*” [\[Report\]](#)

³ U.S. Department of Energy, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, (2024, February 28). “Accounting for Environmental Liabilities” [\[PowerPoint slides\]](#)

As you ably noted during your confirmation hearing, the development of any large infrastructure project, including those involving nuclear technologies, requires buy-in at the state and local levels. And, as you also pointed out, the SNF/HLW issue should not be as controversial as it has become. The volume of the material needing management is relatively small, and the technology for proper management is well understood and developed.

While the details need further consideration, we are encouraged that bipartisan Congressional legislation is being discussed that focuses attention on principles and issues important to putting this multi-generational program on a path to success. These include development of:

- A **governance and funding structure** that maximizes opportunities for sustained performance over the decades required for completion of this program, including:
 - An interim step to re-establish an office within the Department, reporting directly to the Secretary of Energy and solely responsible for the back-end of the fuel cycle;
 - The formation of a new, single-purpose organization—independent of DOE—to manage the SNF and HLW program long-term; and
 - Sustainable, annual access to the Nuclear Waste Fund balance and accumulating interest to effectively implement the program.
- An **integrated program** that includes storage, transportation, examination of the role for reprocessing, and geologic disposal elements; and
- A **collaborative process** that brings about necessary alignment of federal, state, local, and Tribal governments on the siting of necessary facilities.

The good news is that some funding already exists to pay for a successful SNF/HLW program. The Nuclear Waste Fund—with a balance of more than \$49.5 billion⁴ and growing—was established by the NWPA as a fee on nuclear electricity generation paid, directly or indirectly, by consumers of that electricity. The time has come to make those people and companies whole. It is time to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. It is time to be accountable to the communities that have long supported our national security, energy, and government-sponsored research and development activities. In doing so, it may bolster interest in some of these same communities to host new nuclear and nuclear waste projects.

The hurdles that have thus far prevented progress can be overcome, leading to greater confidence in the nation's ability to manage current and future waste and facilitating the deployment of new, advanced nuclear technologies. Thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to meeting with you to discuss how we can work together to advance solutions. To coordinate a meeting with our organizations,⁵ please contact Katrina McMurrian, the Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition's Executive Director, at katrina@theNWSC.org or 615.905.1375.

⁴ U.S. Department of Energy. (2024, November 19) “*The Department of Energy Nuclear Waste Fund’s Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Statement Audit*” [[Report](#)]

Sincerely,



Craig Piercy
Executive Director/CEO
American Nuclear Society (ANS)



Wayne Norton
Chair, Decommissioning Plant Coalition (DPC) Steering
Committee, and President & CEO, Yankee Atomic Electric
Company



Brent Gerry
Chair, Energy Communities Alliance Executive Board, and
Mayor/CEO, West Richland, WA



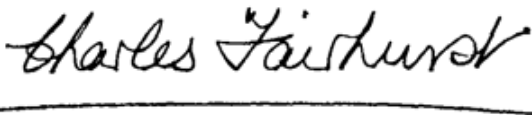
Tricia Pridemore
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Maria G. Korsnick
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Katherine L. Peretick
Chair, Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition (NWSC), and
Commissioner, Michigan Public Service Commission



Charles Fairhurst, Ph.D.
Science Panel Member
Sustainable Fuel Cycle Task Force Science Panel



Todd Abrajano
President & CEO
United States Nuclear Industry Council (USNIC)

cc: Mr. Theodore “Ted” J. Garrish, Senior Advisor to the Secretary

Dr. Michael Goff, Acting Assistant Secretary and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office
of Nuclear Energy

Mr. Paul Murray, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Spent Fuel and High-Level Waste
Disposition, Office of Nuclear Energy

⁵ For more information:

- American Nuclear Society (ANS): <https://www.ans.org/>
- Energy Communities Alliance (ECA): <https://www.energyca.org/>
- National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC): <https://www.naruc.org/>
- Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI): <https://nei.org/>
- Nuclear Waste Strategy Coalition (NWSC): <https://thenwsc.org/>
- Sustainable Fuel Cycle Task Force Science Panel: <https://sustainablefuelcyclesciencepanel.org/>
- U.S. Nuclear Industry Council (USNIC): <https://www.usnic.org/>