

DAN NEWHOUSE
4TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON
www.newhouse.house.gov



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

1641 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
OFFICE (202) 225-5816
FAX (202) 225-3251

3100 GEORGE WASHINGTON WAY
SUITE 135
RICHLAND, WA 99354
OFFICE (509) 713-7374

402 EAST YAKIMA AVENUE
SUITE 445
YAKIMA, WA 98901
OFFICE (509) 452-3243

HOUSE NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WATER, POWER, AND OCEANS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET PROCESS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RULES AND
ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSE

HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY,
HORTICULTURE, AND RESEARCH

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
LIVESTOCK AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE

VICE-CHAIR
NUCLEAR CLEANUP CAUCUS

January 4, 2017

The Honorable Rick Perry
Nominee, Secretary of the Department of Energy
Transition Team Headquarters – Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear Governor Perry,

I write to congratulate you on your recent selection to serve as Secretary of the Department of Energy (DOE) under President-Elect Donald Trump, as well as to provide you with information on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation located in the State of Washington. The Hanford site is the largest defense nuclear cleanup site in the country and is one of 17 such sites being remediated under DOE's Environmental Management (EM) program. As you begin your tenure as our next Secretary of Energy I would like to personally invite you to tour the Hanford site, which will provide you with a unique understanding of the challenges facing Hanford and the importance of ensuring the site has the adequate support and resources necessary to complete its cleanup mission. The federal government, and DOE more specifically, is responsible for the cleanup of radioactive and nuclear waste at Hanford, which is critical to the Tri-Cities community, the State of Washington, and the Pacific Northwest region.

Over 75 years ago the Central Washington region underwent a drastic transformation to assist with the Manhattan Project, leading to the creation of the 586-square mile Hanford site in 1943. Hanford produced plutonium for the first atomic bomb and played a critical role in helping the United States win World War II, and later the Cold War. The weapons activities at Hanford pioneered the technology required to successfully extract plutonium from irradiated uranium, leading to the production of more than 65 percent of the nation's plutonium at Hanford. Our nation's security has benefited from the nuclear defense programs that created large quantities of radioactive and non-radioactive wastes at 17 defense nuclear sites located in 11 states across the country. This nuclear deterrent protected America and our allies, and was made possible by the sacrifice and dedication of the workers at sites like Hanford. However, these efforts came at a high cost, affecting our environment and the workforce. As a result of the plutonium production activities at the site, there is currently 56 million gallons of radioactive and hazardous waste stored in 177 underground tanks at Hanford. Following the cessation of plutonium production in 1989, the weapons production mission shifted to a cleanup mission focused on the millions of gallons of liquid radioactive waste, thousands of tons of spent nuclear fuel, large volumes of transuranic and

mixed/low level waste, huge volumes of contaminated soil and groundwater, and thousands of excess facilities.

While many activities of the federal government are not legally required, cleanup of our nation's defense nuclear waste is not optional – the federal government has a legal and moral obligation to ensure the cleanup mission at the Hanford site is completed. To do so requires strong support from the Administration, DOE, and Congress, which is why one of my top priorities since taking office has been to ensure Hanford has the resources necessary to move cleanup forward safely, efficiently, and in a timely manner, as part of the overarching goal of preparing the Mid-Columbia region for a bright post-cleanup future. If funding for Hanford is not sufficient to meet the site's critical cleanup needs, more cleanup work will be postponed – ultimately leading to higher costs for taxpayers, increased risk of contamination to groundwater and the Columbia River, as well as lawsuits and fines for missed "Tri-Party Agreement" deadlines and Consent Decree milestones.

There are two DOE offices at Hanford managing cleanup operations: the Office of River Protection (ORP) and the Richland Operations Office. ORP is responsible for the retrieval, treatment, and disposal of the millions of gallons of liquid radioactive waste stored at the site and the office's mission is to address the risks posed by this tank waste by immobilizing it through a process known as vitrification. The vitrification process relies on the completion of the Waste Treatment Plant (WTP) at Hanford, as well as supporting facilities to transfer the waste from the tank farms to an operational WTP, in order to dispose of the waste in a safe, efficient manner. This is the largest and most complex environmental remediation project in the nation and is critical to the safety and well-being of those who live in the Central Washington region and downstream along the Columbia River.

The Richland Operations Office (RL) is responsible for all non-tank waste cleanup activities throughout Hanford, including soil and groundwater remediation, facility decontamination and decommissioning, stabilization and disposition of nuclear materials and spent nuclear fuel, and the disposition of non-tank waste. The office oversees work performed by contractors, as well as site infrastructure needs and many other programs that are necessary to ensure the safety of Hanford employees and cleanup operations. While RL has had great success with its cleanup activities along the Columbia River Corridor, many important projects remain, such as remediation of the 324 building and completion of the 618-10 burial ground, continued groundwater remediation that prevents dangerous contaminants from reaching the Columbia River, as well as the decontamination and destruction of waste sites and facilities in the Central Plateau, which still require additional cleanup work.

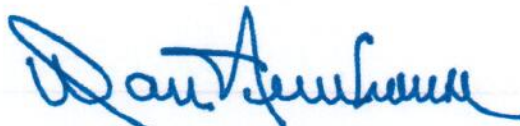
Additionally, it is of critical importance to the Hanford mission that we move forward with the establishment of a permanent repository for storage of our nation's defense nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, which remains the sole legal and congressionally-mandated repository. The Yucca Mountain program has been planned and funded by Congress since 1987, and defense nuclear waste cleanup depends on the completion of Yucca after decades of work and the

expenditure of billions of taxpayer dollars. Yucca is a crucial link in the matrix of America's nuclear program and can safely store high-level radioactive waste for one million years, which is why I urge you to support completion of the repository, as well as a return to responsible management of our spent nuclear fuel.

Nuclear waste cleanup at Hanford has a significant impact on the 4th Congressional District, the State of Washington, and the Pacific Northwest. Ensuring a path forward at Hanford that enables the federal government's existing legal cleanup commitments to be kept, builds upon success that has been achieved, avoids cleanup delays that will ultimately cost the taxpayers more, and makes the cleanup program a priority is critical to our region and to the nation. As you begin your service as our next Secretary of Energy, I recognize there will be many competing priorities under the purview of your Department and I stand willing and ready to work with you to provide Hanford, as well as the entire EM Complex, with the support necessary for the federal government to meet its legal, moral and contractual cleanup obligations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and please do not hesitate to contact my congressional office if we can be of assistance in arranging a visit to the Hanford site or on any other Hanford or DOE-related matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dan Newhouse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "N".

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress