

Tri-Valley CAREs

Communities Against a Radioactive Environment

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The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

A national network of organizations working to address nuclear weapons production and waste cleanup

MEDIA ADVISORY:

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S FY 2022 NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CLEANUP BUDGET REQUEST

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For use with DOE's scheduled budget release on Friday May 28, 2021

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Key contacts from ANA groups are listed below

The White House is releasing its detailed Fiscal Year 2022 budget on Friday, May 28. A so-called "skinny budget" was released on April 9 that increased Department of Energy (DOE) funding to \$46.1 billion, which reportedly includes major new investments in clean energy and climate change abatement. That said, historically roughly 60% of DOE's funding has been earmarked for nuclear weapons production and cleanup of Cold War wastes and contamination. The pending budget release will finally provide details on those programs.

Because the budget release is so late Congress has already announced that it can't consider the annual Defense Authorization Act until September. Related appropriations bills will no doubt be delayed too. This means that the government will probably have to run on a Continuing Resolution(s) for much of FY 2022 (which begins October 1, 2021).

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability strongly opposed the massive 25% FY 2021 increase that the Trump Administration gave to the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA's) nuclear weapons programs and proposed cuts to Department of Energy cleanup.

In addition, DOE's nuclear weapons and environmental management programs have been on the Government Accountability Office's "High Risk List" for project mismanagement and waste of taxpayers' dollars for 28 consecutive years. Related, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has just released a report that projects a 28% increase in costs for so-called "modernization" of U.S. nuclear forces that between the Defense Department and DOE is expected to cost around \$1.7 trillion over 30 years.

The Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, a 34-year-old network of groups from communities downwind and downstream of U.S. nuclear weapons sites, will be analyzing the following critical issues. For details, contact the ANA leaders listed at the end of this Advisory.

General Budget Issues

- Will DOE and NNSA submit to Congress legally required reports on unspent balances from previous years? As Congress moves through the legislative process, will authorizers

and appropriators subtract “Prior Year Balances” from amounts requested by DOE and NNSA in the FY 2022 budget?

- As evidenced by the recent CBO report, escalating “modernization” costs will be a chronic concern. To help meet that concern, will NNSA include in its FY 2022 budget request legally required four year cost projections for its major programs?

Nuclear Warheads

- The W87-1 will be the first new warhead with wholly new components. The Trump Administration projected \$691 million for the W87-1 in FY 2022. Will the first Biden budget request constrain this warhead program? [Note: the W87-1 is slated to top the Air Force’s new “Ground Based Strategic Deterrent” missile and is also the driver for NNSA’s planned expanded production of plutonium “pit” bomb cores, in all expected to cost more than \$140 billion.]
- The W93 is a proposed new submarine-launched warhead whose main advocate is the United Kingdom, which substantially relies on U.S. warhead designs and plans to increase its own nuclear weapons stockpile. The Trump Administration projected \$80 million in FY 2022 to jumpstart this warhead’s development. Will the Biden budget fully fund this new program? Does the U.S. Navy really want this new-design warhead when its own existing warheads have already been tested and are being upgraded?
- Trump’s 2018 Nuclear Posture Review proposed to bring back nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs), which were retired by President George H.W. Bush after the end of the Cold War. Will the FY 2022 Biden budget fund NNSA to conduct warhead design activities for this Cold War relic? Or will it cancel the program? Does the U.S. Navy really want the expense of having to certify attack submarine crews for nuclear-armed SLCMs?
- The B83, the last U.S. megaton-class nuclear bomb, had been slated for retirement prior to Trump’s Nuclear Posture Review reversing its course. Will the Biden FY 2022 budget request include funding to keep it in the stockpile – or fund its promised retirement?

Nuclear Weapons Production

- The Commander of Strategic Command recently testified to Congress that expanded production of plutonium “pit” bomb cores is the #1 “modernization” issue. The Trump Administration increased “Plutonium Modernization” by 70% to \$3.4 billion in FY 2022. Will the Biden Administration keep that level of funding for FY 2022?
- What portion of that funding will be for upgrades to the Los Alamos National Laboratory’s aging plutonium facility so the Lab can produce more than 30 pits per year? How much will be for fast tracking the new Plutonium Bomb Plant at the Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina to make 50 or more plutonium pits per year?
- NNSA’s current cost estimate to “repurpose” the failed MOX plant at SRS (which has already cost taxpayers \$7 billion) to pit production is \$4.6 billion. NNSA’s “Critical Decision-1” to proceed with the bomb plant is expected soon after Biden’s FY 2022 budget release, with likely escalating costs of \$10 billion or more. Will that throw a major monkey wrench into NNSA’s plans of simultaneous pit production at both LANL and SRS? What impact will that have on Congressional authorization and appropriations?

- Is the rationale for expanded plutonium pit production changing from being a “hedge” against technical and geopolitical surprise to replacing all pits in all ~4,000 active and reserve nuclear weapons over the next 50 years? Why is expanded plutonium pit production needed to begin with when the U.S. already has more than 15,000 pits in storage and independent experts have found that pits last at least a century?
- NNSA has claimed that the Uranium Processing Facility at the Y-12 Plant near Oak Ridge, TN is on time and will meet its declared budget cap of \$6.5 billion. However, that is after NNSA moved the goal posts and eliminated non-production missions such as dismantlements and downblending of highly enriched uranium (which would save large security and nuclear safety costs). Because of the UPF’s downscoping, NNSA has decided to continue operating two old contaminated facilities that can never meet modern safety and seismic standards. When is NNSA going to own up to exceeding the UPF budget cap that it promised time and again to Congress?
- Will NNSA’s budget seek adequate funds to decontaminate and decommission excess “High Risk Facilities” at Oak Ridge, Livermore and other nuclear weapons sites, or will officials continue to ignore the “ever increasing risk” (the DOE Inspector General’s description) to workers and the public until it’s too late?

Cleanup

- Will the budget request comply with the law (National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2020, Sec. 4409) and include for Fiscal Years 2022-2026 annual estimates of the costs of meeting legal cleanup milestones at each DOE site? DOE has never provided such cost estimates, which would demonstrate that the budget request is many tens of millions of dollars short of what is required by legal agreements with host states.
- Will DOE include the lifecycle cost estimate to clean up its nuclear sites? Chronic underfunding of DOE environmental programs leads to ever-increasing lifecycle cleanup costs — from \$341.6 billion in FY 2016 to \$388.2 billion in FY 2018 to \$413.9 billion in FY 2019, to providing no lifecycle costs in FY 2020 and FY 2021.
- Does the budget again include funding for "Consolidated Interim Storage" for commercial irradiated fuel (AKA lethal high-level radioactive wastes)? Previous budgets have included that money even though DOE funding of private storage sites is prohibited by federal law and Congress refuses to appropriate the funds.
- How much funding is provided for Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)? [Note: \$115 million appropriated in FY 2021.] Such funds are a bailout to the failing nuclear energy industry since SMRs are not technically or financially viable.
- What funding will Congress request for the proposed new 2,100 foot deep utility shaft at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) even though the shaft project does not yet have permit approval from the State of New Mexico? In FY 2021 Congress requested \$50 million, which brought total funding of the proposed shaft to \$164 million. This represents 83% of the total estimated cost of the shaft of \$197 million for a project, which, if finally approved by the State, will no doubt bust its budget.
- How much will Congress request for the American Centrifuge Plant in Portsmouth, Ohio? In 2019, the American Centrifuge Operating, LLC entered into a contract with the DOE

to build centrifuges to demonstrate production of high-assay, low-enriched uranium (HALEU). Production is about to be licensed by the NRC and would begin an unneeded new nuclear program at a site with a history of safety issues. The technology and use of HALEU also opens the capacity for production of highly enriched uranium, which would be a dangerous proliferation risk.

- Will the budget request include funding to begin work on new storage and staging tanks for high-level tank waste at the Hanford Reservation in Washington state? DOE wants to reclassify high-level waste. To close the tank farms where this waste is stored, DOE wants to reclassify any waste remaining in the Hanford tanks after treatment and leave the waste in the bottom of the tanks rather than removing and treating it. New tanks are needed to replace leaking tanks while DOE makes final decisions on cleanup.

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The annual DOE and NNSA Congressional Budget Requests are typically available on the scheduled release date by 1:00 pm EST at <https://www.energy.gov/cfo/listings/budget-justification-supporting-documents>

For information about specific DOE and NNSA nuclear weapons sites and programs, contact:

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