

July 30, 2024

U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Please support \$47.21 million in funding for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board

Dear Senate Appropriators,

We, the undersigned 28 organizations concerned about health and safety of communities and workers at the nation's defense nuclear facilities, urge you to support the full budget request of \$47.21 million for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (“DNFSB”) in the FY 2025 Energy & Water Development Appropriations bill.

The DNFSB serves five essential functions which include: reviewing and evaluating safety standards; conducting investigations into adverse practices at defense facilities; analyzing operational data to inform safety assessments; reviewing designs of new facilities; and providing technical and economic recommendations to the Secretary of Energy. It is important to note that the DNFSB is unable to perform outright regulation of the defense nuclear complex, but rather the Board works to aid the Department of Energy in maintaining safe and sustainable defense nuclear facilities.

The requested funding is especially important as many of the 16 defense nuclear facilities in the 11 states that the Safety Board monitors are significantly increasing nuclear weapon activities as part of the multi-billion-dollar nuclear modernization programs being funded by Congress. The DNFSB helps ensure that funds are not wasted. Further, without this independent oversight board, these facilities are left to self-regulate, increasing danger to defense nuclear facility employees, as well as the surrounding communities.

The Board has worked tirelessly to ensure safety both on site and in surrounding communities at weapons complex sites across the country, such as the Savannah River Site (“SRS”) in South Carolina; Y-12 at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee; Idaho National Laboratory; Los Alamos in New Mexico; the Hanford Site in Washington State; and the Pantex Plant in Texas. For example, in 2019, the DNFSB issued recommendations regarding the safety of the tritium facilities at the SRS site citing concern for potential fires which would cause released tritium to evaporate. Tritium in this vapor form is 15,000 to 20,000 times more dangerous to humans than tritium in isotope form. The Board’s recommendations for further safety precautions were intended to both mitigate potential fires and explosions and enhance emergency management systems. Without implementation of the Board’s recommendation, an energetic accident of massive proportions could occur, exhausting both the facility’s emergency systems as well as the local healthcare system while putting facility workers at extreme risk.

Again, we urge you to support the full budget request of \$47.21 million for the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (“DNFSB”) in the FY 2025 Energy & Water Development Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director
Arms Control Association

Kevin Kamps, Radioactive Waste Specialist
Beyond Nuclear

Janet Greenwald, Coordinator
Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping

Dan Serres, Advocacy Director
Columbia Riverkeeper

Joni Arends, Executive Director
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety

Mavis Belisle
Dallas Peace and Justice Center

Nikolas Peterson, Executive Director
Hanford Challenge

Gerry Pollet, JD, Executive Director
Heart of America Northwest

Diane D'Arrigo, Radioactive Waste Project Director
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Jay Coghlan, Executive Director
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Frank N. von Hippel,
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Danielle Brian, Executive Director
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Norman Solomon
RootsAction.org

Tom Clements, Director
Savannah River Site (SRS) Watch

Leigh Ford, Executive Director
Snake River Alliance

Don Hancock, Nuclear Waste Program Director
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Scott Yundt, Executive Director
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