

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 13, 2014

Mr. Shaun Donovan
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St, NW
Washington, DC
20503

Dear Director Donovan,

We write to request the Administration, in its next budget request, seek increased funding for vital nuclear material security and nonproliferation programs. We have been concerned that the President has proposed cuts to these programs over the last several years. We believe that unsecured nuclear material poses an unacceptable risk to U.S. national security and hope future budgets will reflect the importance of nuclear security efforts.

The President has said that nuclear terrorism is “the most immediate and extreme threat to global security.” He followed these words by hosting the first Nuclear Security Summit in 2010. While we applaud the President’s leadership in spearheading an accelerated international effort to enhance the security of nuclear and radiological materials, we remain concerned about what the future would look like if we slow these programs. For example, through programs such as the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI), thirteen countries eliminated all the highly enriched uranium (HEU) or separated plutonium on their soil since 2009, including all HEU from Ukraine. Had those efforts been slowed by anemic funding, it is possible that the United States would face the threat of weapons-grade nuclear material in the hands of Ukrainian separatists.

Despite these noteworthy achievements, significant work remains to be done. There are still hundreds of sites spread across 30 countries that have weapons-usable nuclear material. Many of these locations have very modest or insufficient security measures. For these reasons and others, the FY 2015 Senate Energy and Water bill increased funding for these programs above the President’s budget request by \$136 million for the GTRI, \$33 million for research and development, and \$50 million for the International Nuclear Materials Protection and Cooperation program.

Reducing budgets for agencies and programs that help keep nuclear and radiological materials out of the hands of terrorists is out of sync with the high priority that President has rightly placed on nuclear and radiological material security and signals a major retreat in the effort to lock down these materials at an accelerated rate. The recent spate of terrorism in Iraq, Pakistan, and Kenya is a harrowing reminder of the importance of ensuring that terrorist groups and rogue states cannot get their hands on the world’s most dangerous weapons and materials.

Given current world events, now is not the time to pull back on nonproliferation, a major U.S. policy objective. Going forward, we urge you to work with us to ensure that critical nuclear material security and nonproliferation programs have the resources they need. We seek your support for a FY 2016 budget that builds on the Senate Energy and Water proposed FY 2015 funding levels to further accelerate the pace at which nuclear and radiological materials are secured and permanently disposed.

Sincerely,

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