

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 6, 2011

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inouye, Senator Cochran, Senator Feinstein, and Senator Alexander:

As you know, the Fiscal Year 2012 Energy and Water Appropriations bill reported to the Senate on September 7 by the Committee on Appropriations would cut funding for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) by \$706 million (6.0%) from the President's budget request. Funding for NNSA's Weapons Activities—which directly supports modernization of the nuclear weapons arsenal and its supporting infrastructure—would be cut by \$440 million (5.8%) under the bill. Furthermore, the first FY12 Continuing Resolution currently under consideration contains no “anomaly” for these programs, and would cut them to 1.5% below FY11 levels.

These cuts are particularly disturbing because former Secretary of Defense Gates transferred \$8.3 billion in top-line budget authority from the Department of Defense to NNSA over five years. Based upon the House and Senate FY12 Energy and Water Appropriations bills, it appears this defense money was instead given to water-related projects such as dams, dredging, and canals. For example, in the House bill funding for water projects was increased by 4% above the budget request, while total funding for NNSA was cut by 10% from the budget request. As an off-the-record senior defense official recently said, “Secretary Gates wasn't trying to pay for water projects.”

Most alarming, however, is that these cuts occur so soon after your December 16, 2010, letter to President Obama in which you each express your “support for ratification of the New START Treaty and full funding for the modernization of our nuclear weapons arsenal.” Your letter highlights the President's ‘Section 1251’ report—which proposes significant funding

increases for NNSA—and asks the President, “in your future budget requests to Congress, you include the funding identified in that report on nuclear weapons modernization.”

During Senate consideration of the New START Treaty last year, President Obama made several important commitments to the Senate, including to “modernize or replace the triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems, and to “accelerate, to the extent possible, the design and engineering” of key nuclear infrastructure modernization projects. Consistent with this commitment, the President pledged \$85 billion over ten years for nuclear modernization.

To the President’s credit, this increase was fully reflected in his FY12 budget request. His Section 1251 report emphasized that, “given the extremely tight budget environment facing the federal government, these [increased budget] requests to the Congress demonstrate the priority the Administration places on maintaining the safety, security, and effectiveness of the deterrent.” Indeed, in a December 20, 2010 letter to each of you, President Obama said, “I recognize that nuclear modernization requires investment for the long-term, in addition to this one-year budget increase. That is my commitment to the Congress—that my Administration will pursue these programs and capabilities for as long as I am President.”

We respectfully request that you stand by the nuclear modernization commitment made by the President and the Senate during New START ratification—and unequivocally endorsed by each of you in your December letter. That letter contained your written commitments supporting “full funding for the modernization of our nuclear weapons arsenal” that recognized “this represents a long-term commitment by each of us, as modernization of our nuclear arsenal will require a sustained effort.”

Of course, we recognize that the House Energy and Water Appropriations bill also fails to fully fund the President’s request for the modernization program. We intend to work with our House colleagues to restore these critically needed funds. However, in the Administration’s rush to ratify the New START Treaty late last year, the House—unlike the Senate—was not fully consulted on the Section 1251 plan. Therefore, it will take additional time to develop the consensus in the House on the need for nuclear modernization—a consensus we believe is already well-established in the Senate, as reflected in your bipartisan letter of December 2010. We hope that the Senate can take the lead by restoring NNSA Weapons Activities funding in any future FY12 appropriations bills and continuing resolutions; after all, it was an agreement between the Senate and the President that laid the foundation.

We fully recognize that the fiscal challenges facing our nation have put huge stresses on the federal budget. Action must be taken to bring our debt and deficit under control. However, these challenges must not endanger the “long-term commitment” that has been made for a “sustained effort” to reinvigorate our nuclear deterrent—before it even begins. In the Senate’s Resolution of Ratification and the President’s Message to the Senate on New START, it is clear that reductions in the size of the nuclear stockpile are directly contingent upon the planned program of nuclear modernization. Senior leaders in the military and NNSA agree: reductions to force levels mandated by the New START Treaty and beyond cannot be made without unacceptable risk unless the arsenal and its infrastructure are modernized.

Without the funding identified in the Section 1251 report, the nuclear modernization plan cannot be realized. These robust increases are needed to set us on a long-term path. Otherwise, our nuclear deterrent will continue down the road of steady decay that may someday lead to an inability to deter our adversaries, assure our friends, or keep our nuclear weapons safe, secure, and reliable without nuclear explosive testing. As elected officials and stewards of our national security, we cannot permit this. Therefore, if the funding outlined in the Section 1251 plan is not provided, we will seek to ensure, through the annual defense authorization legislation, that any reductions in the nuclear stockpile—including to levels mandated by the New START Treaty—are directly contingent upon successful execution of the planned nuclear modernization program.

We look forward to your response, and to working with you and our colleagues in the House to ensure that nuclear modernization funding is restored for any FY12 appropriations and continuing resolutions.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



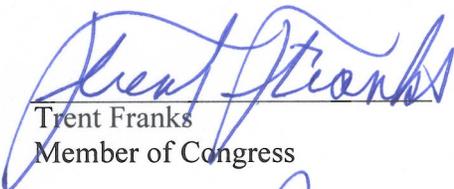
Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



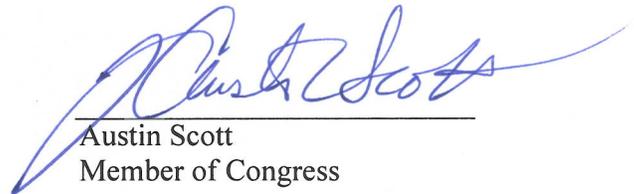
Mo Brooks
Member of Congress



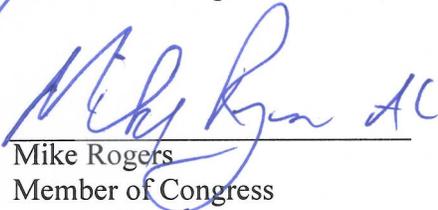
Mac Thornberry
Member of Congress



Trent Franks
Member of Congress



Austin Scott
Member of Congress



Mike Rogers
Member of Congress



John Fleming
Member of Congress



Scott Rigell
Member of Congress