



ECOS

Environmental Council of the States

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The Honorable Shalanda Young
Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

November 22, 2023

Dear Director Young,

I am writing today on behalf of ECOS, the nonpartisan, nonprofit association of state environmental agency leaders, regarding the importance of adequately funding and successfully completing the cleanup of the nuclear weapons complex. State environmental agencies play a key role in this cleanup mission as regulators with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (EM). ECOS urges the Administration to propose a DOE-EM budget to Congress with the funding levels necessary to achieve or exceed negotiated cleanup milestones as required by enforceable federal facility agreements, permits, and consent orders. To meet existing agreements across the country, the Administration needs to substantially increase its request for the EM budget to keep communities safe across the nation.

The sites that make up the nuclear weapons complex played a key role in the United States' national security mission in World War II and throughout the Cold War. Additionally, some of the historic and ongoing nuclear energy research at these sites supports the nation's clean energy future. As many of the communities around these sites are identified by the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool as disadvantaged and all of them have sacrificed for the security of the country, the Administration has a duty to support full and expeditious cleanup of the complex.

The scope of the nuclear weapons complex cleanup is immense, representing one of the largest and most challenging environmental remediation efforts on the planet. Since the creation of EM in 1989, much progress has been made but more is needed. The complex that originally comprised over 100 sites in 33 states has been reduced to 15 sites in 11 states. Work at these sites is progressing with startup of three one-of-a-kind waste treatment facilities, shipments to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) picking up under a new operating permit focused on legacy waste clean-up, and demolition of major buildings at Oak Ridge and Hanford being completed in recent years. However, there is still much more work to do. In fact, the remaining cleanup is still so immense and complex that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified it as the third largest liability for the federal government.

Continued cleanup of the complex is a priority for the states, as stated in [ECOS Resolution 10-3: Cleanup Budgets for the Nuclear Weapons Complex](#), because proper cleanup is critical to protecting human health and the environment and mitigating damage to natural resources. The remaining work includes remediation of additional facilities and waste sites, packaging and shipment of the country's largest volume of transuranic (TRU) waste, treatment of billions of gallons of impacted groundwater, and retrieval and treatment of million gallons of radioactive and chemical waste currently stored in aging underground tanks.

DOE's FY2024 Congressional budget request estimated the remaining life-cycle cost of cleanup to be as much as \$676,127 billion, with estimated active cleanup completion timelines ranging from 2078-2091. Notably, the GAO has identified that from 2011 to 2020, EM's estimated liability grew by \$243 billion, even as it spent \$63.2 billion. This trend highlights the need for significant budget increases to achieve or

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exceed cleanup milestones and reduce liability. Until the Administration approves an adequate budget to meet or exceed these cleanup milestones, long-term costs for the American people and risk to human health and the environment will continue to increase.

In future years as some of the sites complete their active cleanup, other sites will ramp up work so the annual cleanup budget should continue to increase, not decrease.

We encourage the Administration to support a budget for the entire EM program that supports compliance with all enforceable federal facility agreements, permits, and consent orders, and allows DOE to achieve cleanup milestones on or ahead of schedule. Thank you for your careful consideration of this urgent national priority. We welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Grumbles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Ben Grumbles
ECOS Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of Energy
The Honorable Michael Regan, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
The Honorable Jill Hurby, Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration
Mr. William "Ike" White, Senior Advisor for Environmental Management