

January 15, 2003

The Honorable Bill Frist
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Frist:

We have received a letter from Misty Weber of your staff to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) dated October 24, 2002. In the letter, Ms. Weber requested answers to the questions that constituents of yours and of State Representative David Davis asked about the Louisiana Energy Services (LES) proposed uranium enrichment facility.

In one of the constituent letters, Michele Warner of Unicoi, Tennessee, expressed several concerns about the LES site selection. Among the concerns is the ruling LES is seeking to... "bar the public from raising numerous relevant issues in public hearings related to the licensing of a uranium enrichment plant." In response to this concern, NRC would like to point out that the public will have several opportunities to formally participate in the LES licensing process. For example, after LES submits its license application and environmental report to NRC, the public will have an opportunity to petition for a hearing. In addition, the public will have an opportunity to provide information for NRC's environmental impact statement (EIS) scoping process and to comment on NRC's draft EIS. Our intent is to give the public an opportunity to participate in the formal licensing process. In addition, meetings between the staff and LES have been and will continue to be noticed and the public may attend meetings in accordance with the Commission's policy on public meetings.

NRC is currently in the process of addressing the six policy issues, proposed by LES, associated with the licensing of a uranium enrichment facility. On October 2, 2002, shortly after LES selected Hartsville, Tennessee, as its proposed site, NRC requested public comments on these policy issues. The comment period ended on November 13, 2002, and NRC received more than 350 comments.

In the second constituent letter, constituents identifying themselves as a "Worried Group of Scientists in Nashville" also raised several concerns about the LES site selection. During the technical review of the enrichment facility application, NRC will review the radiological risk associated with the facility to ensure that all requirements for radioactive releases are met, and that public health and safety are protected.

The Honorable Bill Frist

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In its licensing review, NRC will also address the additional constituent concerns of transportation risks, emergency planning resources, and radioactive releases from the plant into the environment, in the form of liquid and gaseous effluents.

If you have any further questions about this issue, please contact Timothy Johnson at (301) 415-7299.

Sincerely,

/RA/William D. Travers

William D. Travers
Executive Director
for Operations

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