

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 5th, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20585

Secretary Chu:

We are writing to support a full cleanup of New York's largest nuclear waste site, West Valley, located in Western New York.

West Valley is a large, complex site with vast amounts of long-lasting radioactive pollution. The final resolution of the West Valley cleanup plan will have a major impact on the future of the Great Lakes and Western New York's environment, drinking water supplies, public health, and economic vitality. We are concerned about the environmental and public health risks intrinsic in the Phased Decision Making approach and urge you to support full cleanup of the site.

Under the Phased Decision Making approach, Phase 1 would include moving vitrified high-level waste to a new storage facility. The Phase 1 new cleanup work includes excavating part of the migrating radioactive strontium plume, demolishing and removing the suspected source of the plume, cleaning up lagoons, and installing barriers for groundwater contamination. This cleanup work addresses only 1.2% of the total radioactivity on the site. Decisions on a majority of the waste and almost 99% of the radioactivity, including high-level radioactive waste tanks and two burial grounds, would be addressed in Phase 2.

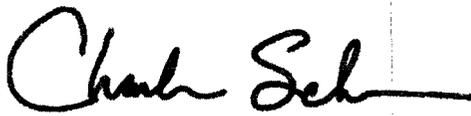
Site-wide removal is the only alternative that truly protects the Great Lakes region. This approach would prevent a catastrophic release of radio nuclides which could cause severe damage to communities, resources and drinking water supplies and Lakes Erie and Ontario. This approach is also the most cost-effective according to a recent study funded by the New York State Legislature. The study, *The Real Costs of Cleaning Up Nuclear Waste: A Full Cost Accounting of Cleanup Options for the West Valley Nuclear Waste*, found leaving buried waste at the site is both high risk and expensive while a waste excavation cleanup presents the least risk to a large population and the lowest cost. Over 1000 years, waste excavation costs \$9.9 billion while onsite buried waste costs \$13 billion to \$27 billion or more if a catastrophic release occurred.

Leaving waste buried onsite does not protect the environment due to serious erosion problems, and poses a significant risk to residents if controls fail and waste pollutes nearby drinking water. The state-funded study found that erosion is an especially

powerful and fast moving force at the West Valley site as it sits on a geologically young landscape which is undergoing a relatively rapid rate of erosion. We are concerned that the potential environmental and health impacts of leaving an estimated 99% of the radioactivity on site for another 30 years was not studied in the DEIS. For instance, the high-level waste tanks, with 300,000 curies of radioactivity, are nearing the end of their functional life (50 years) and any leaks could pollute the local aquifers.

We cannot jeopardize the irreplaceable natural resources of the Great Lakes by leaving West Valley largely unaddressed for another three decades. We urge you to support the Site-wide Removal Alternative as it is the only cleanup approach will effectively protects New York's Great Lakes region. We also strongly advocate extending the public comment period for 90 additional days.

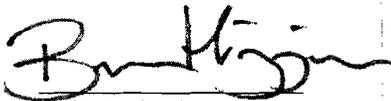
Thank you for your consideration.



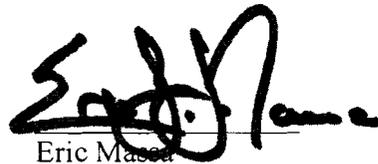
Charles Schumer
Senator



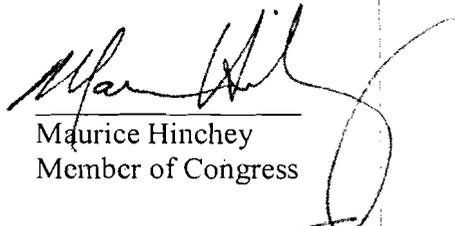
Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator



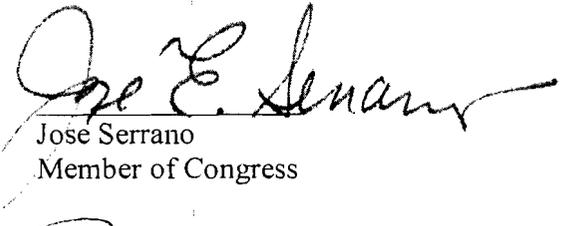
Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Eric Massa
Member of Congress



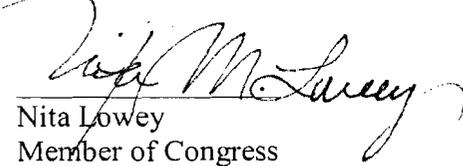
Maurice Hinchey
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Jose Serrano
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Steve Israel
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Nita Lowey
Member of Congress



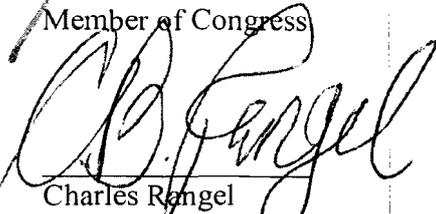
Christopher Lee
Member of Congress



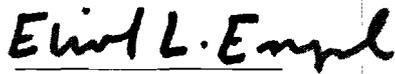
Daniel Maffei
Member of Congress



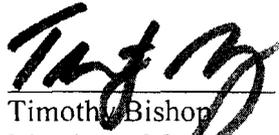
John Hall
Member of Congress



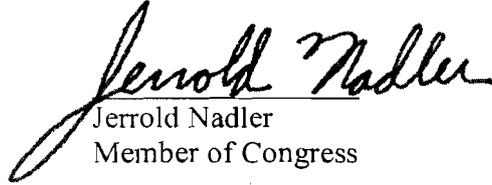
Charles Rangel
Member of Congress



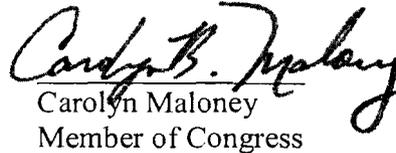
Eliot Engel
Member of Congress



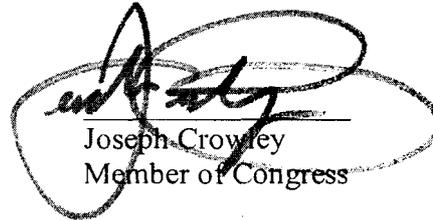
Timothy Bishop
Member of Congress



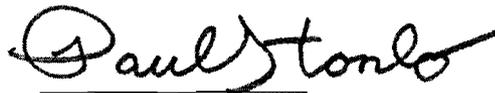
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
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