

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

Date Printed: Mar 30, 2011 15:59

PAPER NUMBER: LTR-11-0171
ACTION OFFICE: EDO

AUTHOR: REP Nita Lowey
AFFILIATION: CONG
ADDRESSEE: PRES Barack Obama

LOGGING DATE: 03/30/2011

To: Roger Rihm, OEDO

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SUBJECT: Urges the White House to coordinate with the NRC and FEMA to ensure the soundness of the emergency evacuation process and give full consideration of the risks and consequences associated with Indian Point etc;

ACTION: Appropriate

DISTRIBUTION: RF

LETTER DATE: 03/24/2011

ACKNOWLEDGED: No

SPECIAL HANDLING:

NOTES:

FILE LOCATION: ADAMS

DATE DUE:

DATE SIGNED:

Template: SECY-017

E-RIDS: SECY-01

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SUBCOMMITTEES:

RANKING MEMBER,
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RELATED PROGRAMS

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AND EDUCATION

HOMELAND SECURITY



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March 24, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I was pleased to read the comments from Department of Energy Secretary Chu on March 21, 2011, in which he stated that nuclear power plants in high population areas with inadequate evacuation plans should receive further study and that officials should determine if these plants "should remain" in light of the risks.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is not permitted to take into account the current environment, including high population density, risk of a terror event, or evacuation plans in determining re-licensing. I am deeply troubled by this regulatory restriction.

As you may know, Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant in Buchanan, New York, is located within 30 miles of New York City. If a 50-mile evacuation were ordered, approximately 21 million people would be forced to flee, including the entire population of New York City and its northern suburbs in Westchester and Rockland Counties. Furthermore, an evacuation route from New York City would send most residents north, through Westchester, and directly toward Indian Point. If a manmade or natural disaster were to hit New York City, the entire evacuating population would be stuck between a disaster zone and a nuclear facility with decades of security and environmental hazards. We simply cannot accept such risks.

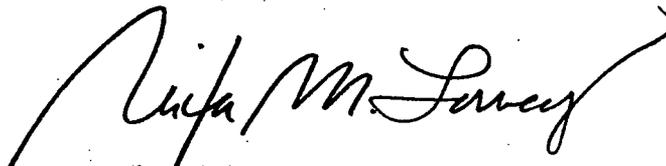
I have supported the Department of Energy's loan guarantee programs, including those for nuclear power. I believe that the nation's energy future must involve a broad assortment of energy production. However, construction of a nuclear power plant within a 50-mile radius of the most populated area in the country would not be permitted today, nor should re-licensing for such a plant be allowed.

The Department of Energy is tasked with promoting nuclear energy and making our energy supply safe and affordable. I respectfully request that you use the full weight of the Department of Energy to develop comprehensive replacement energy plans to offset the 2,000 megawatts of energy provided annually by Indian Point.

In addition, Indian Point is caught in a regulatory nexus between the NRC's deferential regulation of the facility and FEMA's deferential regulation of the evacuation plans. Each entity rubberstamps the findings of the other without truly identifying or addressing major challenges such as the complications of a mass evacuation or the health risks due to a release of radiation in a highly populated area. The health, safety, and security of New York's residents hang in the balance. I respectfully request that White House officials directly coordinate with the NRC and FEMA to ensure the soundness of the emergency evacuation process and give full consideration of the risks and consequences associated with Indian Point's surroundings during the re-licensing process it will undergo in 2013 and 2015.

I look forward to working with you and Secretary Chu on this important task of identifying replacement power.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nita M. Lowey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress

CC: Department of Energy Secretary Stephen Chu
CC: Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Gregory Jaczko
CC: Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate