

Johnny Johnson
President

Ron Johnson
Secretary



Victoria Winfrey
Vice President

Alan Childs II
Treasurer

Audrey Bennett
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

October 10, 2013

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

VIA FACSIMILE
(202) 456-2461

The Honorable John Boehner
The Speaker of the House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

VIA FACSIMILE
(202) 225-5117

The Honorable Harry Reid
The Majority Leader of the Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

VIA FACSIMILE
(202) 224-7327

Re: Impact of Federal Government Shutdown on Nuclear Regulatory Safety

Dear Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Senate Majority Leader:

As you are aware, the federal government shutdown has caused “non-essential” federal government workers to be furloughed, an action that has effects far beyond the halls of the United States Capitol. For the Prairie Island Indian Community (PIIC), the shutdown has caused frustration and uncertainty, as we’ve discovered that the pending Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) inspections associated with the ongoing steam generator replacement project at Xcel Energy’s Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant (PINGP) – like the furloughed inspectors and regulators – have been deemed “non-essential” or, in other words, “unimportant.”

These furloughs beg the question – how can even one inspector of our nation’s nuclear plants be deemed non-essential when our Community and many others rely on these individuals for our safety and protection? PIIC is a federally recognized Indian Nation, located in southeastern Minnesota along the banks of the Mississippi River, approximately 30 miles from the Twin

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Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Our Community is unique as our backyards and businesses sit just 600 yards from the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant and its more than 1.5 million pounds of nuclear waste storage. No other community in the U.S. sits as close to a nuclear site and its waste storage.

Washington's "politics as usual" has also resulted in the suspension of the NRC's Atomic Safety and Licensing Board's license renewal proceedings for the nuclear plant's onsite storage of spent fuel (Independent Spent Fuel Storage Installation), postponed the NRC's regional public meetings on its Waste Confidence Decision, and scaled down operations which could directly affect the oversight of the safety and security of nuclear plants throughout the country. As a cooperating agency with the NRC in connection with the environmental review of the PINGP ISFSI license renewal application, and as the neighbor to an operating nuclear power plant, the PIIC relies on the NRC's information and oversight to ensure repairs, issues and security are appropriately handled at the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant – and that communication is immediate and consistent. With federal inspectors being furloughed, as well as other support personnel, how can the Tribe and our neighbors be assured there will be no increased risk of improper repairs or other potential unchecked safety issues?

PIIC and all citizens who live near nuclear sites deserve uninterrupted inspection, management and communication from the federal government. All American citizens should be considered essential when it comes to our personal health and safety. It only takes one mistake with highly radioactive and toxic materials to result in catastrophic consequences to host communities – consequences that would last for centuries.

Beyond the very real but inconceivable notion that our government is not adequately overseeing the maintenance and safety of our nation's nuclear plants during the shutdown, we are concurrently frustrated with the federal government's broken promise for a federal nuclear waste repository. On-site nuclear storage was first approved on Prairie Island in 1994, with the guarantee under the Nuclear Waste Policy Act that the federal government would be required to develop a permanent repository within two decades. Since that time, the number of so-called "temporary" dry cask storage containers on Prairie Island has grown from 17 to 35 without an end or solution in sight. If Washington politicians continue to ignore the law of the land, up to 98 casks filled with nearly 5 million pounds of nuclear waste will be stranded on Prairie Island.

This lack of leadership in Washington has become an untenable situation for our Community, so much so that we have begun to look to purchase land elsewhere for our Tribe. It would be a difficult decision to leave our ancestral land; however, we believe it may be the only way to ensure the safety and health of our Community members and the thousands of visitors to our resort and casino.

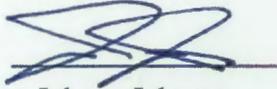
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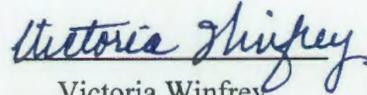
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We urge each of you and all the Members of Congress to immediately end the lock-out of federal nuclear inspectors – and all NRC employees – and to reexamine the nuclear waste storage crisis that faces our country. The health and safety of millions of Americans will be at risk if the government continues its inaction.

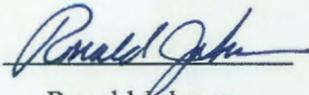
Sincerely,



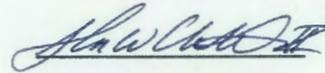
Johnny Johnson
Tribal Council President



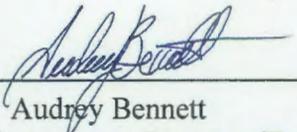
Victoria Winfrey
Tribal Council Vice President



Ronald Johnson
Tribal Council Secretary



Alan W. Childs II
Tribal Council Treasurer



Audrey Bennett
Tribal Council Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

cc: The Honorable Amy Klobuchar	Via Facsimile: (202) 228-2186
The Honorable Al Franken	Via Facsimile: (202) 228-0044
The Honorable John Kline	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-2595
The Honorable Timothy J. Walz	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-3433
The Honorable Erik Paulsen	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-6351
The Honorable Betty McCollum	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-1968
The Honorable Keith Ellison	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-4886
The Honorable Michele Bachman	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-6475
The Honorable Collin Peterson	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-1593
The Honorable Richard Nolan	Via Facsimile: (202) 225-0699

Mike, Linda

To: Niedzielski-Eichner, Phillip; Vietti-Cook, Annette
Subject: RE: PIIC Letter to President Obama Regarding Impact of Government Shutdown on Nuclear Regulatory Safety

From: Levy, Jonathan [<mailto:Jonathan.Levy@hq.doe.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, October 15, 2013 9:56 AM
To: 'nicole_buffa@ios.doi.gov'; 'Shilpa_Phadke@who.eop.gov'
Cc: 'sarah.harris@bia.gov'; Niedzielski-Eichner, Phillip
Subject: Re: PIIC Letter to President Obama Regarding Impact of Government Shutdown on Nuclear Regulatory Safety

Adding Phil, who is Alison's COS at NRC.

From: Nicole Buffa [mailto:nicole_buffa@ios.doi.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, October 15, 2013 09:37 AM
To: Levy, Jonathan; Shilpa Phadke <Shilpa_Phadke@who.eop.gov>
Cc: Sarah Harris <sarah.harris@bia.gov>
Subject: PIIC Letter to President Obama Regarding Impact of Government Shutdown on Nuclear Regulatory Safety

Levy or Shilpa – Can one of you please help Sarah find the appropriate contact at NRC who can help us with this request? Seems fairly important.

Thanks in advance,
Nikki

Nikki Buffa
Deputy Chief of Staff
U.S. Department of the Interior
202-219-3861
nicole_buffa@ios.doi.gov