

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 29, 2010

The Honorable Steven Chu  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20005

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Interior  
18<sup>th</sup> and C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Chu and Secretary Salazar:

We write to express our concern with the apparent inconsistency between the actions at the Department of Energy (DOE) and those at the Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding President Obama's support for nuclear energy and his intent to reduce our reliance on foreign sources of energy. While DOE has been supportive of the development of new nuclear power plants, actions at DOI could exacerbate our reliance on foreign countries by impairing our ability to produce the fuel needed for nuclear power here in the United States.

A mineral withdrawal of roughly one million acres of federal land in northern Arizona will hamper the development of a domestic supply of some of the highest quality uranium deposits. We question the need for such action considering the fact that mining activities in this area have not been shown to have any detrimental impact on the Grand Canyon watershed or to the park as confirmed by U.S. Geological Survey studies. We also believe that a proper balance between conservation and public land use outside the Grand Canyon National Park was achieved with the passage of the Arizona Wilderness Act, which permitted the development of uranium deposits in northern Arizona.

Eliminating the ability to access and develop 326 million pounds of uranium oxide, as estimated by the U. S. Geological Survey, at a time when 90 percent of the uranium needed for clean nuclear power is imported could damage ongoing efforts to promote energy security. The impact of a mineral withdrawal on such vast scale must be considered in a broader context and should account for DOE actions given the authority vested in the Secretary of Energy by the Atomic Energy Act to control the "possession, use, and production of atomic energy."

We respectfully request that, in response to this letter, your agencies provide an explanation of actions that this Administration may take to ensure an adequate and secure supply of uranium is available for the generation of clean nuclear power. The importance of a coherent and comprehensive strategy in this regard cannot be overstated given the need for greater energy security, the growing demand for uranium internationally, and the eventual completion of the U.S. uranium purchase agreement with Russia.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Lee Neubauer

Jim Vetter  
Darin Hatch

Don Kuhl

Mike Crogo

Jan Rind

John McCain

John Barrasso  
Don McChaff

Lamar Alexander

Robert Bennett

John Thune

Mike Enzi