

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5000

March 31, 2022

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

RE: Establishment of the Uranium Reserve

Dear Secretary Granholm:

We are writing to express our continued concern with the Department of Energy's (DOE) delay in establishing a uranium reserve. This delay is particularly disturbing as the current situation between Russia and Ukraine has brought to the forefront the vulnerability of the United States reliance on Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan for the uranium needed to power our nuclear plants. The fact that nearly half of the uranium needed to fuel U.S. nuclear reactors is purchased from Russia and its supporting countries only serves to highlight the untenable situation we now find ourselves in due to the lack of a stable supply of uranium. Given the importance of isolating Russia at the present time, it is especially critical that we build a stable supply of domestic uranium, and we strongly urge DOE to move forward and start purchasing domestic uranium for the reserve.

The idea for the reserve was developed by the U.S. Nuclear Fuel Working Group to avoid geopolitical risks in response to the Department of Commerce investigation (Commerce Report) on the effect of imports of uranium on national security. The Commerce Report found that "U.S. nuclear electric power generators would not be able to operate at full capacity and would not be able to support critical infrastructure electric power needs if foreign nations, particularly Russia and other former Soviet states, chose to suspend or otherwise end uranium exports to the United States."¹ The same report further states that "The Secretary has determined that to remove the threat of impairment to national security, it is necessary to reduce imports of uranium to a level that enables U.S. uranium producers to return to an economically competitive and financially viable position."² The reserve was specifically designed to address these issues.

It has been 15 months since Congress appropriated \$75 million to be used for the establishment of the reserve. The U.S. has ample supplies of uranium ready to mine, and it is our understanding that the license, permits, facilities and storage capacity needed to start the reserve have been obtained; yet during the Nomination Hearing for Dr. Kathryn Huff on March 17, 2022, she expressed there are additional steps that need to be completed before it will be stood-up. In light of this, we ask that you reply to the following questions by April 4, 2022:

¹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/08/02/2021-16113/publication-of-a-report-on-the-effect-of-imports-of-uranium-on-the-national-security-an>

² *Id.*

1. In August 2021, DOE published a notice in the Federal Register requesting public comment on the establishment of the uranium reserve program. The comment period closed on October 15, 2021, and we are unaware of any further steps that have been taken since that time. What is the current expected timeline for DOE to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the uranium reserve?
2. How long do you expect the RFP will remain open for response?
3. Once the RFP process has been completed, how long do you anticipate it will take DOE to review the responses before standing-up the uranium reserve?
4. Please provide the basis and reasoning for why DOE has failed to request funding for this vital program for the second fiscal year in a row.

The uranium reserve is an important first step toward ensuring a stable supply of uranium for the U.S. power sector and restoring our global position as a leader in nuclear energy. Russia is known for weaponizing its energy resources for geopolitical leverage. As their unprovoked invasion of Ukraine continues, we must reevaluate our overreliance on Russia and other state-owned competitors to ensure our energy security. Our weakened nuclear fuel supply chain is highly vulnerable to disruption from Russia, and we should be taking all steps to eliminate our reliance on them as a global partner in light of the unjustified war they are currently waging. It is imperative that DOE stand-up the uranium reserve as soon as possible. This has become a matter of national, energy, and economic security and continued delays are no longer an option.

Sincerely,



Liz Cheney
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress

cc: Kathryn Huff, Assistant Secretary (Designate) for Nuclear Energy, Department of Energy
Jill Hruby, Under Secretary for Nuclear Security for the Department of Energy and
Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration
Lloyd Austin, Secretary, Department of Defense
Gina Raimondo, Secretary, Department of Commerce
Antony Blinken, Secretary, Department of State