



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

March 26, 2010

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and
Water Development
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee on Wednesday. I appreciated our discussion about the President's FY 2011 Budget Request for the Department of Energy.

Much of our discussion centered on the Administration's plan to close down the Yucca Mountain project. There were several points during the hearing testimony when I misspoke or was not clear. I would like to clarify those points in this letter.

I understand your concerns about reprogramming. I assure you that I take very seriously the prerogatives of your committee, and our obligations under the law. My general counsel has studied this matter closely, and has advised me that we do have the authority within the law to take the reprogramming actions that we have planned. As you know, the Department of Energy sent you a letter on February 17, notifying you of our intent to reprogram funding in FY 2010 for the Office of Civilian and Radioactive Waste Management (OCRWM). I assure you that my staff and I will keep you better informed of the process as we move forward in the coming weeks and months with more significant steps toward shutting down the Yucca Mountain project.

I would also like to clarify my comments on the relationship between our Yucca Mountain shutdown activities and the NRC process. The Department is taking action to shut down the program in light of the NRC's decision to grant our motion to stay the license application process. In short, I do not believe we should spend money on a licensing process that has been suspended, especially given the Administration's intention to pursue alternatives to Yucca Mountain. I also believe that we need to begin actions now to ensure that the shutdown occurs in an orderly fashion that takes into account the impacts on our employees and their families. For example, we are making every effort to help affected employees find other opportunities within the government for which they are qualified. Finally, I want to assure you that an integral part of our plan is to proceed in a manner that preserves all relevant documents and all relevant learning so that no scientific knowledge is lost.



These are complex issues, and I would like to visit with you in person soon after the recess to discuss them in more detail. However, I did not want to let my statements yesterday go uncorrected.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Ms. Tara Hicks, Office of External Coordination, at (202) 586-7487.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Chu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "C".

Steven Chu