Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 9, 2012

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
425 I Street NW, Room 700
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We request that you meet with our delegation to discuss the future of the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PGDP) in Kentucky and share with us the Department of Energy's (DOE) plan for enriching depleted uranium "tails" located in Paducah. It is likely that in May of this year, the site will be forced to cease operations if the Department does not use its existing authority to enrich the tails located on site, which will extend the life of this plant and save the 1,200 jobs directly affiliated with it. DOE has both the jurisdiction and the authority to resolve this issue. The continued lack of action from the Department, particularly with this many jobs at stake, is inexcusable.

Through various hearings in both the House and Senate, we have asked you to provide us details on how you plan to address the challenges facing the Paducah plant, particularly in regard to re-enriching the depleted uranium tails. Yet years have passed and no plan is in place. The justifications for DOE to act are clear. Just last year, the Government Accountability Office again confirmed that re-enriching the tails would generate billions in revenue. It will also offset roughly $100 million per year in cost associated with cold storage of the Paducah plant. In addition, the uranium generated by re-enriching the tails will be of critical importance to our continued national security – a point your own Department acknowledged in its January 20, 2012 Notice of Intent, where the Department cited the need for "LEU that is unencumbered by peaceful use assurances and thus can be used for defense purposes." Finally, we have worked closely in recent months with the uranium mining and conversion industries to reach a consensus agreement to re-enrich the tails, which will provide these industries long-term certainty in their respective markets. Our delegation has taken every step possible to clear the way for DOE to exercise its authority on this issue. Continued inaction is indefensible. The Department's failure to generate a plan for Paducah is underscored by the thousands of jobs that depend on the continued operation of the plant.

The President has said that job creation is his number one priority. Last year, he remarked, "We've got to do everything we can to put our friends and neighbors back to work…and give the economy the jolt that it needs." Certainly, saving these existing jobs

– that are incredibly important to the economic health of Paducah and local communities in rural Kentucky – would be in line with the President's vision of job creation.

It is our expectation that you will maintain the commitment you made and present us with a detailed DOE plan for Paducah when we meet. Given the urgency of this issue, we request that the meeting be scheduled on or before February 28th, 2012. Our staff will be in touch to confirm a meeting time and location, and to assist in completion of the planning documents. Please direct any questions to Elizabeth Ladt of Leader McConnell's staff at 202-224-2541.

Sincerely,

MITCH MCCONNELL
United States Senator

RAND PAUL
United States Senator

ED WHITFIELD
Member of Congress

cc: Daniel B. Poneman, Deputy Secretary of Energy, Thomas P. D'Agostino Under Secretary for Nuclear Security & Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, David Huizenga, Acting Assistant Secretary Environmental Management, Dr. Peter B. Lyons, Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy