

Legislators press DOE to release funds

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Three members of Congress have urged the U.S. Department of Energy to release funds for cleanup activities at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant.

In a letter dated Wednesday, U.S. Sens. Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, along with Congressman Ed Whitfield, urged DOE Secretary Ernest Moniz to release \$265 million in funds appropriated in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 for ongoing and future cleanup operations at the plant.

"We urge you to move as quickly as possible to release funds appropriated for this purpose in an effort to rehire Kentuckians who have recently been laid off and to hire employees to begin new cleanup work," the letter reads.

The three officials also urged Moniz to move as quickly as possible to execute the indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity, or IDIQ, contract so work can begin on reclaiming the gaseous diffusion plant. They wrote that it is vital to the Paducah community that the DOE continue cleanup and begin new work to ensure that experienced workers do not leave the region.

"Should these workers leave the area, we feel the quality of the vital cleanup work at the site could suffer and potentially cost taxpayers more in the long run," the letter states.

The letter also recommends that a permanent DOE manager be hired for the Paducah site and asks that full decommissioning and decontamination of the gaseous diffusion plant be made a priority in the upcoming fiscal year.

The cleanup funding was included in a \$1 trillion federal spending bill that passed in mid January. The omnibus bill provides \$120 million for current cleanup at the site, according to the letter.

DOE contractor LATA Kentucky confirmed last week that \$102 million was allotted for its part in the cleanup operations. The amount allowed it to hire 47 workers, with more job openings possible in the coming months for a total of about 95 jobs, LATA spokesman Joe Walker said.

The DOE allotted an additional \$47 million for operations at a recycling facility for depleted uranium hexafluoride, as well as about \$9.5 million to fund security and safeguards, for a total of about \$321 million allocated to Paducah for the 2014 fiscal year.