



THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

September 15, 2010

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Since the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was submitted to the Senate for advice and consent, questions posed during committee hearings on the Treaty have highlighted, among other things, the Administration's plans to modernize the U.S. nuclear weapons complex, in particular the President's budget request for FY 2011 and projected out-year requests to accomplish the missions of the Stockpile Stewardship and Management Programs. I write to assure the Committee of the Administration's strong support for this program.

As you know, the *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR), published in April, addresses U.S. national security goals and details this Administration's commitment to sustaining an arsenal of nuclear weapons that meets 21st century standards of safety, security, and effectiveness. The entire Administration is committed to taking the steps necessary to realize this objective.

Our budgets seek to reverse five years of declining support for nuclear stockpile management. The President's FY 2011 budget request for weapons activities in the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) provides the funds needed to "ramp-up" activity and revitalize the enterprise in the near term. We have submitted plans for significant funding increases, starting with a \$624 million increase in FY 2011 and increasing to a \$1.64 billion plus-up by FY 2015. This is a cumulative increase of more than \$5.68 billion over the FY 2010 five-year plan. The FY 2011-2015 President's Budget was based on the best estimates available at that time, and reflected our assessment of necessary investments and the capacities to absorb increased funding.

Earlier this spring, the Administration provided reports to Congress describing our 10- and 20-year plans, respectively, to sustain and modernize nuclear delivery systems, and the nuclear stockpile and the associated infrastructure. As the President has demonstrated in these plans and in his budget, he recognizes that the modernization of the Nation's nuclear deterrent will require sustained higher-level investments over many years.

Out-year budgets are, by definition, projections built on assumptions. NNSA has used the time since the spring -- when the NPR and New START were concluded -- to work on updating initial assumptions. We now have a more complete understanding of stockpile requirements, including the life extension program needs. Similarly, the designs of key facilities such as the Uranium Processing Facility and the Chemical and Metallurgy Research Replacement Facility have progressed. Based on information learned since the submission of the President's FY 2011 budget and the report under section 1251 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2010, we expect that funding requirements will increase in future budget years.

Later this fall, the Administration will provide the Congress with information that updates the Section 1251 report. At that time, and in our future budgets, we will address any deficiencies in the Future Years Nuclear Security Program. We are also prepared to brief the oversight committees and interested Senators as these programs progress, so that Congress can have full visibility into the program and confidence in our processes.

Finally, the Administration has actively engaged the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of the President's 2011 request, and we will continue to do so. Moreover, as further evidence of the President's commitment to an immediate start to his modernization initiatives, the Administration earlier this month recommended that the Committees provide for a rate of operations consistent with the President's request for NNSA weapons activities during any continuing resolution period.

This Administration has expressed its unequivocal commitment to recapitalizing and modernizing the nuclear enterprise, and seeks to work with Congress on building a bipartisan consensus in support of this vital project. I look forward to continued work with Congress to ensure that we accomplish our shared objective to maintain and strengthen U.S. nuclear security.

Sincerely,



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

cc: The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
Ranking Member