

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 23, 2025

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20585

The Honorable Brandon Williams
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
1000 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Wright and Administrator Williams,

We write to express our deep concern about the furlough of nearly 80% of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) federal workforce.¹ Furloughing the vast majority of the agency's personnel is not only an unprecedented step, it is deeply harmful to U.S. national security. While the Republicans' government shutdown continues, we are also troubled that this announcement appears to be politically motivated rather than the result of careful deliberations amidst a funding shortfall.

In a notice sent to Congress, the NNSA announced that it will exhaust funding and will be forced to furlough 1,400 employees, while about 375 Department of Energy direct-hires will remain on the job. As you know, federal employees play a vital role in U.S. national security, and the NNSA is an essential component of our national nuclear security enterprise. From maintaining and modernizing our nuclear weapons stockpile, to overseeing the Navy's nuclear propulsion, and managing nuclear nonproliferation programs, the United States is safer because of the dedicated public servants at NNSA, who have already been under attack by this Administration.² These federal employees play a critical oversight role in ensuring that the work required to maintain nuclear security is carried out in accordance with long-standing policy and the law. Undermining the agency's workforce at such a challenging time for U.S. global leadership diminishes our credible deterrence, emboldens our international adversaries, and makes the world a more dangerous place. Further, NNSA is working collaboratively with the Department of Defense on the modernization of our nuclear deterrent. Whereas NNSA has made the determination to not deem the overwhelming majority of its federal employees as essential, DOD has for nearly every program associated with nuclear modernization, leaving the Navy and Air Force without counterparts to continue this critical work.

The NNSA manages an extensive network of national labs throughout the United States. Each plays a unique role in ensuring our nuclear stockpile is safe, secure, and reliable. For example, the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS), managed by NNSA, is one of the premier facilities tasked with carrying out the NNSA's mission. The NNSS is where NNSA's Stockpile Stewardship Program deploys a wide range of technologies focused on experiments in weapons science to ensure the stockpile's reliability. Since the United States no longer conducts full-scale nuclear tests, stockpile scientists at the NNSS obtain data from breakthrough experiments, engineering audits and analysis, high-tech computer simulations, and world-class diagnostic measurement systems to keep warheads reliable, safe, and secure. As the nuclear arsenal is now more than fifty-years-old, such experiments are imperative to understand and predict how these aging devices will perform if deployed. Per your announcement on October 20, 2025,

¹ United States, Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration. *Memorandum for NNSA Employee: Notice of Furlough*. October 19, 2025. (accessed at: <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2025/10/trump-admin-furloughs-majority-of-top-nuclear-weapons-staff-amid-shutdown-00615145>).

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/17/us/politics/federal-job-cuts-nuclear-bomb-engineers-scientists.html>.

approximately sixty-eight NNSA employees at the Nevada National Security Site have been furloughed, calling into question the safety and security of the sensitive material at NNSA facilities and the reliability of our arsenal.

As Secretary Wright noted in his press availability in Las Vegas, furloughing NNSA employees has never happened before. Government shutdowns, however, have occurred throughout the agency's 25-year history. This is the fourth shutdown President Trump has presided over, but the NNSA has never furloughed employees during prior shutdowns. It begs the question why this step was necessary now and why more NNSA employees were not deemed essential, given the gravity of their duties.

In addition, this decision has far-reaching foreign policy consequences. With arms control and nuclear nonproliferation regimes slowly eroding as a result of the President's lack of global leadership, our adversaries are keenly focused on this development. It is very likely that your decision to furlough 1,400 NNSA workers is being seen in Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang as evidence of an unstable U.S. nuclear deterrent, presenting a unique and sobering threat to our national security.

Congress has a right to know exactly how much more dangerous our lives are now that you have sent the vast majority of NNSA's staff home. Accordingly, we demand answers to the following questions no later than November 7, 2025:

1. What is the legal basis for designating the majority of NNSA's civilian employees as non-essential (not excepted) employees?
2. What is the total number of NNSA civilian employees that have been furloughed as of October 20, 2025?
3. What is the total number of NNSA civilian employees that remain on duty as of October 20, 2025?
4. How many civilian employees have been furloughed from each department, program, or office within the NNSA?
5. How many civilian employees remain on duty in each department, program, or office within the NNSA?

While Republicans have failed to use their governing mandate to keep the government open, we implore you to ensure that national security is not sacrificed as a consequence of their inaction. We urgently demand that you rescind this furlough notice and return NNSA employees to the important job of ensuring our nuclear stockpile is safe, secure, and reliable.

Sincerely,



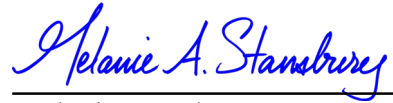
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



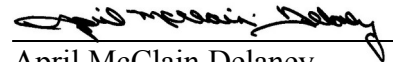
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



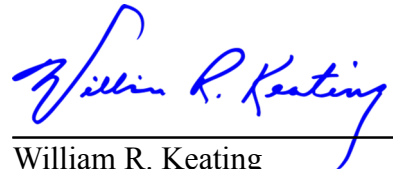
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



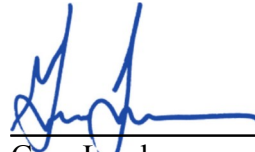
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress



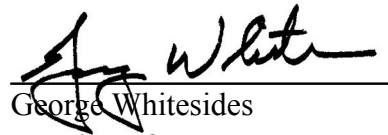
Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



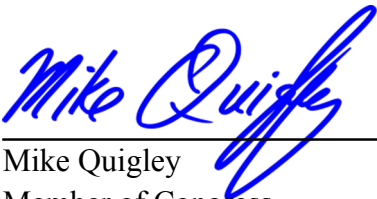
JM Tokuda
Member of Congress



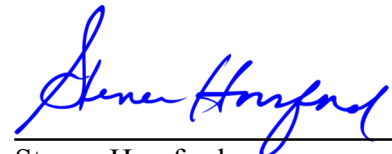
Susie Lee
Member of Congress



George Whitesides
Member of Congress



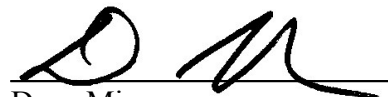
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Dave Min
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark Takano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Takano" clearly distinguishable.

MARK TAKANO

Member of Congress