

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write this letter in response to ongoing calls from two uranium mining companies seeking to take advantage of the global Coronavirus pandemic for their own benefit by seeking \$150 million for the establishment of a uranium reserve. On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we urge you to continue to prioritize the health and wellbeing of the public and reject any bailout for the uranium mining industry in any future COVID-19 emergency response packages.

We strongly oppose artificial supports for the domestic uranium industry including, but not limited to, invoking the Defense Production Act to purchase stockpiles of uranium or other minerals. The companies falsely suggest there will be a shortage of uranium due to the pandemic and that they are ready to step up domestic production to address any disruption in the international supply chain since the U.S. largely imports its uranium. However, there is no shortage of uranium nor substantial risk of supply chain disruption, even during this global pandemic. Even power utilities themselves have raised no alarm about supply chain disruptions and have in fact stated the opposite. In a recent letter to the Arizona Corporation Commission, Arizona Public Service, which operates the largest nuclear plant in the country - the Palo Verde Nuclear Plant in Arizona - has said “APS is confident that it is prepared to provide reliable service throughout this pandemic to support the needs of our customers.”ⁱ Furthermore, given the nature of this pandemic, any disruption to mining and process of uranium due to COVID-19 in other countries would have the same disruption for mines and mills here in the U.S., rendering the companies’ argument moot.

Uranium mining already has an extensive legacy in the United States of harming the health and wellbeing of local communities, especially tribal communities who bear the brunt of impacts. A 2019 study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the University of New Mexico, and Navajo agencies found that Navajo Nation citizens, including infants, had elevated levels of uranium in their bodies.ⁱⁱ Additionally, lung cancer and silicosis have been shown to be frequent occupational hazards for uranium

miners -- and we know that those with respiratory issues are especially at risk from COVID-19.

Congress should prioritize spending that creates jobs that heal our lands and waters from mining's toxic legacy and provide new economic opportunities without further endangering public health and putting national and cultural treasures like the Grand Canyon and Bears Ears at risk. Rather than aiding an industry that has never paid any federal royalties for the more than \$300 billion worth of hardrock minerals it has extracted from our public lands, while leaving taxpayers with an estimated \$54 billion clean-up bill and ongoing health problems,ⁱⁱⁱ we urge Congress to invest stimulus funds towards the assessment, reclamation, and cleanup of the hundreds of thousands of abandoned hardrock mines on public and tribal lands, which are currently polluting roughly 40 percent of western headwaters.^{iv}

We deeply appreciate the work you are doing to respond to this global health emergency and urge you to prioritize the wellbeing of the public during this crisis over bailing out the languishing uranium mining industry that inevitably endangers public health.

Sincerely,

Alliance for a Green Economy
Arizona Faith Network
Arizona Mining Reform Coalition
Arizona Trail Association
Arizona Wildlife Federation
Beyond Nuclear
Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance
Cape Downwinders
Center for Biological Diversity
Chispa Arizona
Citizen Power, Inc
Citizens Awareness Network
Citizens' Resistance at Fermi 2 (CRAFT)
Clean Water Alliance
Coalition for a Nuclear Free Great Lakes
Coalition to Protect America's National Parks
Community Organizing Center (For Mother Earth)
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Conservation Lands Foundation
Dakota Rural Action
Don't Waste Arizona
Don't Waste Michigan
Earthjustice
Earthworks

Ecological Options Network
Endangered Species Coalition
Food & Water Action
Friends of Del Norte
Grand Canyon Trust
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice
Idaho Organization of Resource Councils
Information Network for Responsible Mining
Laguna Acoma Coalition for a Safe Environment
LEAD Agency, Inc.
League of Conservation Voters
Malach Consulting
Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nevada Nuclear Waste Task Force
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
North American Water Office
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Nuclear Watch New Mexico
Nuestra Tierra Conservation Project
Nukewatch Wisconsin
Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance
Physicians for Social Responsibility, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
Portneuf Resource Council
Proposition One Campaign
Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center
San Onofre Safety
Save Lake Superior Association
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save Our St. Vrain Valley
Sierra Club
Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter – Three Lakes Group
Smith River Alliance
Snake River Alliance
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Southwest Research and Information Center
Syracuse Peace Council
The Peace Farm
The Wilderness Society
Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition

Uranium Watch
Veterans for Peace
Western New York Environmental Alliance
Western North Carolina Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility
Western Organization of Resource Councils
Western Values Project
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Arizona

Cc:
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
House Committee on Natural Resources

ⁱ <https://docket.images.azcc.gov/E000005505.pdf>

ⁱⁱ

http://itepsrv1.itep.nau.edu/itep_course_downloads/TWRAP/15_tlefSuperfund/SFSiteSpecificPres/TLEF2013_NavajoBirthCohortStudy_Navajo.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.taxpayer.net/wp-content/uploads/ported/user_uploads/file/Mining/TaxpayerMiningReport_Aug2008.pdf

^{iv} <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/20004GRW.PDF?Dockey=20004GRW.PDF>