

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 21, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

The Honorable Brandon Williams
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear President Trump, Secretary Hegseth, Secretary Wright, and Administrator Williams:

We write to express our opposition to any effort to resume explosive nuclear weapons testing as announced by the Trump-Vance Administration.¹ For over thirty years, the United States has maintained the most credible, sophisticated, and secure nuclear deterrent in the world without a single explosive test. The recent suggestion that the nation “must be ready to test again” reverses longstanding posture and represents a fundamental shift in U.S. nuclear policy. This unwarranted and scientifically baseless decision risks undermining public health, destabilizing international norms, and triggering a new era of global nuclear competition.

Decades of science-based stockpile stewardship have proven beyond a doubt that explosive nuclear testing is unnecessary to sustain America’s deterrent. Through the combined power of cutting-edge subcritical experiments, next-generation diagnostics, and high-performance computing, the National Nuclear Security Administration and our premier national laboratories have continuously confirmed the arsenal’s safety, security, reliability, and effectiveness.² These innovations and capabilities have made live detonations redundant and counterproductive to maintaining confidence in the systems that underpin our national security.

Renewing explosive testing will resume a dark chapter in American history that still continues to leave deep human and environmental scars. Between 1951 and 1992, over 900 nuclear tests blanketed the American West with radioactive fallout, exposing millions of Americans to devastating health effects, especially “downwind” communities in Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico.³ Decades of evidence from the Nevada National Security Site, the Marshall Islands, and other test regions document the lasting toll of contamination, illness, and environmental damage.⁴ Many of those harmed are still awaiting long-overdue compensation under the

¹ Konstantin Toropin, Ken Moritsugu, and Mari Yamaguchi, “Trump Appears to Suggest the U.S. Will Resume Nuclear Weapons Testing for First Time in 30 Years,” *Associated Press*, October 30, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-us-nuclear-tests-explainer-e641db1a4c99721bbd4ecd187d7dff65>.

² U.S. Department of Energy, *Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan, Fiscal Year 2024* (Washington, D.C.: National Nuclear Security Administration, November 2023), https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/FY24SSMP_FINAL_NOVEMBER_2023_0.pdf.

³ U.S. Department of Energy, *U.S. Nuclear Tests: July 1945 through September 1992* (DOE/NV-209 Rev.16, Nevada Operations Office, September 2015), https://nnss.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/DOE_NV-209_Rev16.pdf.

⁴ Remus Prăvălie, “Nuclear Weapons Tests and Environmental Consequences: A Global Perspective,” *Ambio* 43, no. 6 (2014): 729–744, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-014-0491-1>.

Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA).⁵ Resuming testing will only compound these injustices, expose new generations to radiation and environmental risk while many are already denied care for past exposure, and further erode public trust in the government's commitment to protect its own citizens.⁶

Every Administration since 1992 has affirmed that explosive testing is not required to ensure America's nuclear stockpile credibility.⁷ Reversing that position would erode America's standing as a nation that forged, led, and upheld the global moratorium embodied in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).⁸ It would abandon decades of bipartisan U.S. leadership that sustained international stability and left North Korea isolated as the only nation to defy that global norm in the 21st century.⁹ To abandon that legacy now would project weakness and signal to adversaries that the U.S. is abandoning its commitments to no longer lead by science, principle, and partnership. There is no need to move forward with an act that will degrade U.S. diplomatic credibility, heighten global tensions, embolden rival powers, and set the stage for a renewed nuclear arms race.¹⁰

We therefore request your Administration to take the following actions:

1. Reaffirm the U.S. moratorium on explosive nuclear weapons testing and immediately halt any preparatory or infrastructure activities that signal intent to resume such testing.
2. Provide a full, unclassified bipartisan briefing to Congress outlining any directives, funding allocations, or site activities associated with renewed test readiness, including at the Department of Energy and the Department of Defense.
3. Publish an interagency assessment detailing the projected health, environmental, and economic impacts of potential testing, including radiation exposure risks to downwind communities and service members.
4. Deliver to Congress a comprehensive cost estimate for conducting an explosive nuclear test—including equipment, personnel, time, and cleanup—along with an explanation of the strategic rationale.
5. Establish an updated presumption of exposure for military personnel, federal employees, and civilians who served or lived near historic or proposed test sites, ensuring expedited access to care and compensation under the RECA.
6. Recommit to the principles and verification mechanisms of the CTBT and reaffirm U.S. leadership in scientific stewardship, strategic stability, and responsible global engagement. We also urge the Administration to renew efforts for a Senate consideration and ratification of the CTBT.

⁵ Scott D. Szymendera, *The Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA): Overview and Policy Issues* (CRS Report R43956, Washington, D.C.: CRS, July 19, 2024), https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R43956/R43956.15.pdf.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Certification Letters to the President on the Nuclear Stockpile, 1995–2025* (Washington, D.C.: Government Archives, January 2021), https://trumpadministration.archives.performance.gov/energy/FY2021_january_Nuclear_Stockpile_Annual_Assessment.pdf.

⁸ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT),” *United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs*, 2025, <https://disarmament.unoda.org/en/our-work/weapons-mass-destruction/nuclear-weapons/comprehensive-nuclear-test-ban-treaty/>.

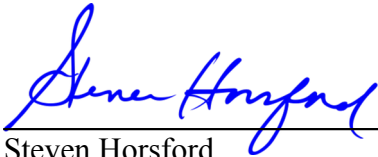
⁹ John Krzyzaniak, “Introduction: Nuclear Testing in the 21st Century—Legacies, Tensions, and Risks,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 7, 2024, <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2024-03/introduction-nuclear-testing-in-the-21st-century-legacies-tensions-and-risks/>.

¹⁰ David Kenneth Smith, “The Chapter on U.S. Nuclear Testing Must Be Closed,” *Stimson Center Commentary*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.stimson.org/2025/the-chapter-on-us-nuclear-testing-must-be-closed/>.

The U.S. has long led the world not by example of force, but by the force of our example. Our strength has been rooted in science, responsibility, and the moral authority that comes from honoring our commitments. To abandon decades of restraint would not project power, it would betray it.

As Members of Congress, we will not allow this reckless step backward to jeopardize our people, our principles, or our planet. We will use every legislative, oversight, and appropriations tool available to uphold America's commitment to safety, stewardship, and peace.

Sincerely,



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



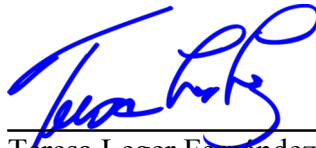
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



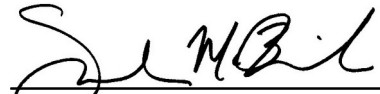
Susie Lee
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress