



HEALTH PHYSICS SOCIETY

“Specialists in Radiation Safety”

30 November 2009

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman, Chair
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Howard W. Dickson, CHP

President

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Dear Senators Bingaman and Murkowski:

On behalf of the Health Physics Society (HPS), I urge the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to give full support to and take timely action on H.R.3276, the “American Medical Isotope Production Act of 2009.”

The Health Physics Society, a nonprofit scientific organization of approximately 5000 radiation safety professionals, has joined with eight other professional organizations in a coalition to address two concerns of national importance: (1) an inherent need for reliable domestic suppliers of Molybdenum-99 (Mo-99); and, (2) efforts to curtail the use of high-enriched uranium (HEU) in radionuclide production as a non-proliferation strategy and to deter terrorism. A discussion of these concerns with recommendations for action by the United States is contained in a white paper by the coalition of professional organizations titled “Reliable Domestic & Global Supplier of Molybdenum-99 (Mo-99) and Switch from Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) to Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU) to Produce Mo-99.” The white paper is accessible at http://hps.org/documents/isotopes_white-paper_multiorganization.pdf.

A national effort to address these concerns requires (1) a commitment by the administration to have a coordinated inter-agency program with the specific responsibility to achieve reliable domestic independence in the production of Mo-99, (2) continued appropriations by Congress to provide the financial investment needed by the administration’s program, and (3) support of the Congress through authorizing legislation that will serve as the basis for the continuation of the administration’s program until its goals are achieved.

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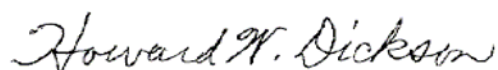
The Obama administration has made a commitment to achieve domestic independence in the production of Mo-99. The HPS believes the initiative being led by the National Nuclear Security Administration through the Global Threat Reduction Initiative with oversight and interagency coordination by the Office of Science and Technology Policy has the capability to achieve the establishment of a reliable domestic production of Mo-99 within the next ten years. The Congress has appropriated sufficient support for fiscal year 2010. The remaining task is to obtain congressional support through authorizing legislation that will serve as the support and basis for the administration's program into the future.

The HPS believes H.R.3276 provides the needed congressional support for the administration's program.

We understand there may be some concern about the provisions in H.R.3276 for imposing a ban on export of HEU at a fixed time in the future. HPS's interest in the issue of domestic production of radioisotopes is related to the radiation safety implications of the issue, including the implications of exporting HEU for this purpose. In 2005, the HPS did not support the inclusion of an HEU export ban provision in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The HPS felt that the controls under which HEU was exported were rigorous enough to make the export acceptably safe when compared to the prospect of not having a supply of Mo-99. This position was influenced by the lack of any administration program or congressional support for a program dedicated to the domestic production of radioisotopes. The HPS still considers the controls for export of HEU for production of radioisotopes to be rigorous enough to make the risk of diversion for terrorism, or other malicious use of the HEU to be speculative. However, we feel that with appropriate congressional support, the initiative to establish reliable domestic production of Mo-99 will be successful within the next ten years, making the need to export HEU unnecessary. Therefore, we feel the export ban provisions will prove to be extraneous and, therefore, do not form a basis for not supporting H.R.3276.

I hope this letter is helpful in your considered deliberation of action on H.R.3276. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this letter or HPS support for H.R.3276.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Howard W. Dickson".

Howard W. Dickson, CHP