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ASSISTANT MINORITY WHIP

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AFRICA, & INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

ARMED SERVICES

COUNTIES:

AIKEN
BARNWELL
LEXINGTON
ORANGEBURG*
RICHLAND*
(*PARTS OF)

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

August 31, 2020

The Honorable Alan Wilson
Rembert Dennis Building
1000 Assembly Street, Room 519
Columbia, S.C. 29201

Dear Attorney General Wilson,

After continuous delays and years of lawsuits, South Carolina is finally receiving what is long overdue. Thanks to the ceaseless work of you and your legal team, South Carolina is receiving \$600 million from the federal government in a settlement agreement. These economic and impact assistance payments are a direct result from the Department of Energy (DOE) abandoning the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MOX Facility). The MOX Facility mission was to convert legacy weapons-grade plutonium into fuel suitable for commercial reactors. By forsaking MOX Facility construction, the DOE violated federal law (50 U.S.C. § 2566).

The counties of Aiken, Barnwell, and Allendale, in which the Savannah River Site is located, were gravely impacted from the end of the MOX Facility project. MOX employed approximately 1,700 people, and its closure resulted in uncertainty for many families in the region. This had a compounding effect on the local communities and economic development. With these counties now storing defense plutonium without the benefit of the bargain struck years ago and reflected in governing law, it is of critical importance that they are remunerated for this adversity.

For this reason, and recognizing that in these challenging times there are critical needs across the State, I ask that a significant portion of the settlement payment be utilized for the benefit of the Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell counties in which the Savannah River Site is located. Economic development organizations in this region are eager to put these funds to work for the people most affected by the termination of the MOX Facility project. Plans have been drawn for business parks that would attract private industries that have synergy with the site's scientists, engineers, and technology – providing new jobs that would enhance the region's industrial base and create tax revenue generators for local governments.

To fill these new jobs, it is of equal importance to utilize a portion of the settlement payment to invest in local schools, colleges, and universities to cultivate a workforce that specializes on nuclear and advanced manufacturing jobs that are expected to grow in the region. The University of South Carolina – Aiken and Aiken Technical College both have nuclear

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programs aimed to bridge the gap in the nuclear workforce. Additional funding will allow these schools, South Carolina public universities, and local academia in Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell, Orangeburg, and Lexington counties to contribute to this pipeline for a skilled workforce.

Further to that end, a portion of the settlement payment should be used to fund broadband internet access in these rural areas. Current events have exposed the challenges to and problems with education and the workforce when connectivity is lacking. As Governor McMaster has aptly noted, “[b]roadband connectivity is a powerful catalyst for economic and social advancement. It is no longer a luxury – it is a necessity....”

We must take advantage of the momentum of growth in this region. The impacts of a sizable investment of the \$600 million would be a great benefit to the region. These funds will allow some of the State’s highest unemployment areas to develop new job growth, modernize school curriculums, introduce critical access to rural broadband, and lay the groundwork for economic prosperity.

Understanding the financial climate the State is currently experiencing, I kindly request that you support these endeavors and ensure these settlement funds are directed to the communities in the affected region that is home to the Savannah River Site.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Warmest regards,
Joe Wilson

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress (SC-02)

I appreciate your service.