



The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

April 25, 2001

The Honorable Doc Hastings
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Hastings:

Thank you for your letter of April 4th, 2001, requesting that I suspend the Record of Decision to permanently deactivate the Fast Flux Test Facility (FFTF). I have reviewed the points you and others have made and will suspend for 90 days the decision to permanently deactivate the FFTF as indicated in the Record of Decision for *The Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Accomplishing Expanded Civilian Nuclear Energy Research and Development and Isotope Production in the United States*.

As you are aware, I indicated during my confirmation hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that the January 19, 2001 decision to permanently deactivate the FFTF would stand unless significant new information was presented which warranted a review of this decision. In response to your request for reconsideration, I am initiating this review of the decision to permanently deactivate the FFTF. I believe that we can effectively complete this effort in 90 days.

Proponents of reactivation such as you have identified several potential missions for the FFTF. As I understand it, a variety of experts believe the FFTF may yet have the ability to play an important role in nuclear energy research and development, the production of medical radioisotopes to treat cancer and other diseases, and the production of Plutonium-238, an isotope used to provide electrical power for space missions.

The status of the FFTF has been an issue for almost a decade, and the years of debate have produced a wealth of information in support of both reactivation and deactivation. I understand, however, that the perception exists that, to date, the decisions made with respect to the facility have not been open and fully considered public input. I ask for your help in ensuring that, regardless of the final decision, this review be conducted in such a fashion that no interested party will have complaints about the process during the 90-day review.

My action to suspend deactivation of the FFTF will not prejudice the Department's final decision to activate or deactivate the FFTF. That decision will be made at the conclusion of the review and will take into consideration the ability to secure significant partnerships associated with the use of the FFTF, as well as a comprehensive analysis of the various benefits and difficulties associated with the operation of this facility.

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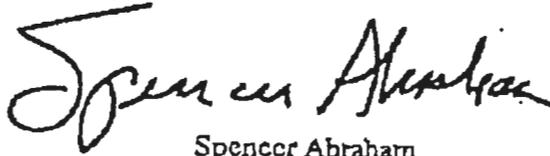
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Finally, as we have discussed, my hope is to visit the Hanford facility in the next 90 days. If your schedule permits, I hope you will have the opportunity to join me and brief me on your views on the progress of the review at that time.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to your continued input as the Department reviews the status of the Fast Flux Test Facility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Spencer Abraham". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Spencer Abraham