

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 21, 2025

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

The Honorable Teresa M. Robbins
Acting Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Wright and Acting Administrator Robbins,

We write to express our deep concern with the recent terminations of National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) personnel. Given the critical role the NNSA plays in maintaining the safety, security, and reliability of the U.S. nuclear stockpile; modernizing the stockpile; preventing nuclear proliferation; and supporting our national defense, any abrupt changes in staffing across the Nuclear Enterprise present significant national security risks.

The Nevada Test Site – now known as the Nevada National Security Sites (NNSS) – was ground zero for the majority of our country’s explosive nuclear testing between 1945 and 1992, with 100 atmospheric and 828 underground tests conducted at the site. Since 1993, the NNSA’s Nevada National Security Sites have overseen the nuclear Stockpile Stewardship Program at the Principal Underground Laboratory for Subcritical Experiments (PULSE) – an underground laboratory where scientists conduct subcritical experiments to certify the reliability, safety, and effectiveness of our nuclear stockpile without the need to return to the days of explosive testing. This is the only facility in the country where this is done, and PULSE is undergoing a major construction project that will soon host the most capable weapons radiographic systems in the world to enhance the certification of the modernized and aging stockpile.

The NNSS also hosts the Nonproliferation Test and Evaluation Complex – the largest facility for open-air testing of hazardous materials and biological simulants in the world – which trains first responders for nuclear catastrophes. Another Nevada NNSA equity is the Remote Sensing Laboratory on Nellis Air Force Base and Joint Base Andrews – providing radiological emergency response teams along the west and east coast, respectively, who stand ready to provide emergency radiological response to anywhere in the world with deployable teams of experts. These personnel, and those of the NNSS, are the nation’s experts in detecting and locating “dirty bombs,” “loose nukes,” sources of radiation, and determining origin and attribution through nuclear forensics.

NNSA personnel possess highly specialized expertise that is not easily replaceable, and any disruption to their work could have far-reaching consequences for U.S. national security and global nuclear stability. Reductions in staff, particularly among senior leadership and technical experts, could compromise the continuity of critical programs, modernization, and weaken the ability of the U.S. to respond to emerging nuclear threats.

Adding to these concerns, there are reports the NNSA is now attempting to rehire the terminated employees but has been unable to contact some of them. This raises serious questions about the decision-making process behind these terminations, as well as the broader implications for workforce stability at such a sensitive national security facility. The fact that the agency is struggling to restore essential personnel suggests these firings were premature, mismanaged, or not conducted with full consideration of the potential impacts on national security operations.

In light of these concerns, we request the following information to fully assess the impact of these terminations on national security:

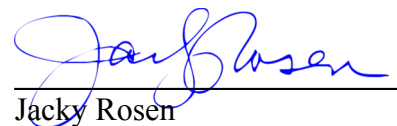
- The total number of National Nuclear Security Administration employees who were terminated, including those in Nevada.
- Any planned future rounds of firings, including those in Nevada.
- The specific positions and responsibilities of these employees.
- How many employees, if any, have been successfully rehired.
- A detailed explanation of the rationale behind these terminations, including any financial, policy, or strategic considerations that led to these decisions.
- How the hiring freeze, put in place by the current administration, impacts the mission at NNSA.
- A detailed assessment on how these firings and then rehiring impact any future recruitment at the NNSA.

Given the sensitive nature of the NNSA's mission, transparency is essential to ensure these personnel changes do not undermine U.S. nuclear deterrence or the security of our nation. We urge your immediate attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator