

March 21st, 2012

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Peter Visclosky

"Good morning, Mr. Huizenga and Mr. Pondonsky. Thank you for taking the time to discuss the Environmental Management (EM) and Health, Safety and Security (HSS) offices with us today. Mr. Huizenga, this will be your first time before the Subcommittee as the leader of the Office of Environmental Management. I have faith that you will be up for the challenge ahead.

"The appearance of both the EM and HSS today will give the Subcommittee a perspective on the individual programs, and also the opportunity to understand how they interact and work together to ensure DOE projects are meeting the mission while also maintaining a safe work environment.

"The Manhattan Project, and the resulting Nuclear Weapons Complex, was an unparalleled scientific achievement that was made possible by the development of an unprecedented infrastructure and industry, in both its size and legacy. Today we must address the environmental impacts of this monumental undertaking, ensuring the health and safety of those communities affected. The Federal government's obligation to remediate these sites is without question; however, given the constrained fiscal environment, it will be paramount that all resources are used to their fullest potential. I understand that the Department is undergoing a review of the implications of flat funding to the clean-up effort, I would be interested today in hearing if you have any initial feedback for the Subcommittee.

"Mr. Huizenga, I will make a point to you that I made to both Secretary Chu and the NNSA Administrator D'Agostino. Issues of project management, corporate governance, and workplace safety are not the most electrifying issues to tackle, but they are vital to the success of the Department's mission. If strong leadership and fundamental management reform are not forthcoming at the Department of Energy, it will significantly inhibit the execution of your mission as well as the Department's credibility. I hope that you will take some time today to update us on your specific actions in this regard, in particular, any progress you may have made in getting EM off the GAO's high risk list.

"Mr. Pondonsky, in my opinion, worker health and safety is one of the most important elements in meeting the Department's mission. In particular, given the materials and facilities under EM's charge, the potential human and financial losses that can come from having an unsafe worksite are mindboggling. I appreciate that you take seriously your charge to ensure the safety of the Department's projects and look forward to discussing in detail your office's progress on this front.

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the time."