

MARIA CANTWELL

WASHINGTON



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

April 29, 2010

The Honorable Byron Dorgan, Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Bennett, Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Dorgan and Ranking Member Bennet:

I write today in support of increased funding for the Former Worker Medical Screening program run by the office of Health, Safety and Security within the Department of Energy. This important program has been underfunded and we owe it to our Department of Energy nuclear weapons complex workers to provide them no cost screening for work-related illnesses.

This program was established by the 1993 Defense Authorization Act to provide free of charge screening for radioactive substance exposure to all department of energy workers. During the entire history of the program there have been attempts to contact 360,000 of the estimated 600,000 eligible workers. Over 107,000 have responded and expressed interest in the program. However, during the entire period since 1993 only 60,000 workers have had an initial screening and only 8,600 of those have received their 3 year follow up screening. Even given the limited reach of the program, initial screenings have identified over 6,500 cases of Asbestos related lung disease and many other work related health conditions.

The program is currently funded at \$18.6 million a year. I am requesting that the program's funding be increased to \$25 million a year. Without this increase in funding the program cannot conduct the needed re-screenings that should be done every three years. At the current level of funding the program is only fulfilling its responsibility for initial screenings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell".

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator