



November 22, 2011

Dear Friend,

I want to alert you to two hot developments for Hanford's [Vitrification Plant](#):

1) Congressman Ed Markey, the highest ranking Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, sent a letter to Department of Energy Secretary Stephen Chu asking sharp questions about whistleblower retaliation and unsafe operations at the Vit Plant. See the Congressman's statement [here](#). Read the letter [here](#). The Congressman is asking the right questions, and demanding information on Bechtel's self-investigation on safety culture, information on technical issues that have been raised since 2006, and information about DOE involvement with whistleblower retaliation. Markey wrote:

“DOE seems to be more interested in paying contractor fees than in paying attention to safety concerns or to those who are disciplined for raising them, The Hanford nuclear site already has a history of leaking radioactive waste into the water. Its environmental legacy must not be further tarnished by catastrophic safety failures causing radioactive releases and a record of shooting the nuclear safety messengers.”

2) Yesterday, the Department of Energy announced that not only will the cost of the vit plant skyrocket AGAIN from \$12.3 billion just over \$13 billion, but that the plant will not be finished by 2019 – in violation of an legally-binding agreement with the State of Washington. Insiders tell Hanford Challenge that the true cost overrun is actually \$1.9 billion. Just 13 months ago, the DOE signed a Consent Decree agreement with the State of Washington setting forth new deadlines, which DOE now admits will be broken. Read Hanford Challenge's statement [here](#).

Pressure is mounting on the Department of Energy to show that it can turn around the jeopardized vitrification plant, and oversee the design and construction of a plant that will work. We call on the DOE to cease retaliation against whistleblowers that are raising issues vital to this objective. Rep. Jay Inslee called for Congressional hearings on the vit plant in response to DOE's announcement. Hanford Challenge thinks that is a great idea.

[Contact your members of Congress](#) and [Senators](#) and let them know that you want a full investigation into the broken nuclear safety culture at Hanford's Vitrification Plant.

Thank you!

Tom Carpenter
Executive Director

P.S. Stay tuned for more updates on the Vit Plant in the next few weeks, events are moving quickly.