



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Robert F. McDonnell
Governor

April 13, 2012

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The Honorable Jackson H. Miller
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The Honorable John C. Watkins
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The Honorable Israel D. O'Quinn
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The Honorable Phillip P. Puckett
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The Honorable Frank W. Wagner
P.O. Box 68008
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Dear Members of the Uranium Subcommittee of the Coal and Energy Commission:

Early in the legislative session we agreed that the recent NAS study on uranium mining and milling in Virginia came to no definitive conclusion on the safety of such operations, and raised numerous unanswered questions. By letter of January 18, 2012, you asked me to bring to bear the resources of the executive branch agencies to provide you with further information and analysis you need to inform your decision about potential uranium mining in the Commonwealth. We agreed to undertake that work by formulating the interagency review process, and have begun the scientific and factual analysis you requested. I directed the accomplishment of eighteen general tasks, including the creation of the draft statutory and conceptual regulatory framework you requested. It is most important to note that the goal of the work is to determine from scientific data and expert opinion whether uranium mining and milling can be properly regulated in Virginia so as to protect public health and safety and the environment. We also outlined protocols to ensure multiple opportunities for public comment

and participation and to incorporate such public comment and suggestions into the interim and final work product of our Uranium Working Group (UWG). Our proposals were made with the understanding that you have asked for an extensive scientific, legal, and regulatory analysis generated from expert opinion and evaluation, as opposed to just gauging public opinion.

Nonetheless, we continue to work to ensure that the process for accomplishing the assigned tasks is as open and transparent as possible, while preserving the ability of the scientists and experts involved to complete their work within the stated timeframe. By letter of March 27, 2012, we asked you to provide us with any questions, concerns, or suggestions you have for our process or for additional opportunities for public comment and participation by April 6, so that we could incorporate them as we move forward. On April 4, we met with multiple stakeholders and public groups who had previously reached out to us with their concerns about the transparency of the process, and we solicited their specific suggestions. As a result of these efforts, we have added some suggested elements to the process, as reflected in the enclosed revised document of our study methodology. We believe that incorporation of these suggestions will result in an even more open and effective process, and ultimately useful, final product.

It is fair to say that most stakeholders and groups with whom we met or from whom we have heard have already formed their opinions for or against uranium mining and thus are not completely objective. In fact some stakeholders opposed to potential milling and mining want no further study and want the moratorium to remain in place. Conversely, much of the legislature and our Administration have not formed a judgment yet, since all the health and safety issues have not been fully analyzed. Public health and safety will continue to be our overriding concern.

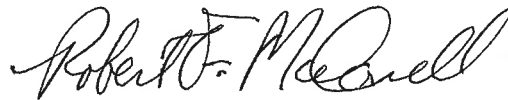
You have been clear that, like us, you believe openness and public participation are important in the work you have asked us to do. We believe your review and written acceptance of the process presented here, as adjusted by the language shown by underlining, will establish the necessary level of public confidence in the process we have outlined. Future debate in the legislature should be on science and facts, not process. Only a high level of public confidence in this effort will allow us to accomplish your goals through our work. We believe that the process will be more open to the public than the previous NAS study was.

As I have said on numerous occasions, I have made no decision on the health and safety of potential uranium mining and milling in Virginia, and firmly believe that one cannot objectively reach a conclusion at this point in time, with the incomplete information that currently exists. Any policy decision must be based on the factual findings of this working group in addition to all of the other studies, reports, information, and public opinion that has been and will be received during the course of this process. Only then, will we be able to better understand the potential benefits and concerns of such mining and milling. With that information, we will all hopefully be in a better place to form a fully educated opinion as to whether or not mining and/or milling of uranium in Pittsylvania County is in the best interests of that region or the entire Commonwealth.

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I thank you, in advance, for providing your support for the work of this working group on behalf of you and all concerned citizens of Virginia. We look forward to your prompt approval of this process so we may move forward expeditiously.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert F. McDonnell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "McDonnell" clearly distinguishable.

Robert F. McDonnell

MLK/kfs

cc: Maureen Matsen, Deputy Secretary