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Subject: Bombshell on the 'Bomb Plant'

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Bombshell on the 'Bomb Plant'

Dear Friends:

Most know the Savannah River Site was called the 'Bomb Plant' because of its Cold War legacy. This week the old 'Bomb Plant' was hit with a bombshell when President Obama released his budget calling for the MOX project currently under construction at SRS to be shutdown. Obama's 2015 budget proposal freezes funding for the MOX project, while officials explore less costly options.

Don't Be Fooled

President Obama's budget proposal calls for the MOX facility to be put on a "cold stand-by". That's government-speak for shutting down and abandoning the Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility which is designed to turn weapons-grade plutonium into nuclear reactor fuel.

That's part of a nonproliferation agreement between the United States and Russia to dispose of weapons-grade plutonium. It's a costly one-of-a-kind project; more than \$4 billion has been spent and it's estimated it will cost \$7.7 billion when finished (\$3 billion over budget).

The Obama Switch

Just two months ago the news came that SRS will be receiving more funding than it requested in the next federal budget to be used for site clean-up and other projects. That news brought reassurance that SRS funding would help stabilize Aiken's economy. That "win" for the local community was offset by this week's MOX news. The MOX program currently employs about 1,600 workers. There are no specifics yet, but layoff's will soon be coming. The local economic impact is significant – for every SRS job on site, there is a direct link to 2-1/2 jobs outside the fence in retail, restaurants, support companies, etc.

Political Reaction

Sen. Lindsay Graham reacted to the MOX decision: *"This cannot stand. Make no mistake about it, President Obama's budget submission to Congress is both irresponsible and reckless. His decision to dramatically reduce funding for the MOX program to a point that raises serious questions about its viability represents a fundamental breach of trust with the residents of South Carolina."*

No Plan & We're Stuck

With the closing of MOX the federal government says it's now evaluating options for alternative plutonium disposition. That's government-speak again for: We don't have a plan and Aiken County is going to be stuck with tons of surplus plutonium onsite. The problem is compounded by President Obama and Sen. Harry Reid's purely political decision a couple of years ago to shutdown the Yucca Mountain (Nevada) repository for spent plutonium violating an agreement with SC and other states. Add to that, the repository in New Mexico is problematic. Experts tell me the alternative is to down-blend the plutonium in H Canyon and keep it here in our backyard. But even that can't be done without a concession from the Russians. Given the current Russian-American political crisis, that could be difficult.

Immediate Impact

The shutdown of MOX is going to have an immediate impact on Aiken and surrounding counties. Losing 1,600 jobs is devastating to employees, families and our local economy. As a caring community we need to do everything possible to help those caught up in the web of political decisions.

The Need for a Long Term Vision

In my view, this is a defining moment that must be seized. Aiken County has long been dependent on the Savannah River Site as its chief economic driver. For more than 60 years it has brought higher paying jobs resulting in a robust local economy and a thriving cultural base. While we treasure the investment of our many other industries (i.e., Kimberly-Clark, Bridgestone, AGY, etc.), SRS is the 8,000 pound gorilla that's shrinking.

Every sector of our community needs to come together and help forge a new and revitalized long term vision for SRS. This must not be a 'closure site' as many fear. The assets at SRS are many, particularly the National Lab which is a crown jewel. Look no further than [Oakridge, Tennessee](#), where they have propelled their [national lab](#) by attracting businesses that are investing in their area and economy.

Forging a new vision won't be an easy task, but it's clear it can't be left solely to a federal government that breaks promises and changes course frequently. It will take citizens, local community leaders, state leaders, cooperative federal elected officials along with private industry to join together to make a new and vibrant path for SRS.

First Step

Toward the goal of focusing on a new vision, your Aiken County State Representatives and Senators will be meeting with Governor Nikki Haley and Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt next Tuesday. We will have discussions on how state government can help. *It's a start!*

At the Statehouse...

Preparing, debating, and approving the state budget is the most important thing we do as legislators each year. As a Conservative, I begin with the premise that this is your money - not the government's (I wish Congress began with the same attitude.)

Next week the House will focus solely on budget debate and will record more than 200 votes. The proposed budget totals \$23.9 billion, with \$6.9 billion in total state appropriations. (The other funds come in the form of Federal pass-through dollars to school districts, for example, or the "other funds" budget that includes items like the college tuition parents pay directly to public colleges.) It is a balanced budget and falls in line with the proposed "inflation plus population growth" spending cap that the House has approved on numerous occasions.

The budget has literally hundreds of spending priorities. You can see all of the budget documents yourself by [clicking here](#).

If you want the abbreviated version, here's a link to a [PowerPoint presentation](#) that summarizes the budget.

In Aiken County...

I Stand with CAMILLE ! A standing-room only crowd attended the announcement by Camille Furgiuele that she's a candidate for the Aiken County Council District 2, the seat being vacated by Scott Singer who is not seeking reelection. No one is more qualified. Camille, a Conservative Republican, has a wealth of experience. She served as the CFO of Newton, NJ, for 23 years and she was the Town Manager/CEO of Newton for 18 years. An Aiken County resident for the past decade, she has served on the County Transportation Committee and is currently a member of the County Planning Commission. She's going to make a great Council person!

Switching Parties: I joined many other elected officials in welcoming longtime Aiken County Councilwoman Kathy Rawls to the Republican Party. In her announcement that she is switching to the Republican Party, Kathy said, "The Democratic Party has left me, I'm not leaving it."

As always, **thank you** for the privilege of serving you.
Should you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to call or write.

In your Service,

Photo of the Week

Bill Taylor

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Wednesday was 'Sir Big Spur Day' at the SC House of Representatives. We honored the treasured Gamecock live mascot, a resident of Aiken County. 'Big Spur' was accompanied by his handlers, Mary Snelling & Ron Albertelli. 'Big Spur' has brought joy to tens of thousands of Gamecock fans and fostered a championship mentality in Gamecock athletes.

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