

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

We understand the Administration continues to view an agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation with Russia, pursuant to section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act (42 U.S.C. 2153), as an important element of the U.S.-Russian bilateral relationship. We write you today to express our apprehension and concern at this support for advanced nuclear cooperation with Russia under current circumstances.

During testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 13, 2008, Secretary Rice noted that Russia views sensitive trade with Iran in strategic areas such as air defense systems as “legal.” In fact, under existing U.S. law – in particular the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act – some Russian companies are already subject to sanctions as a result of their continued exports of advanced conventional weapons to Iran. Taken together, Russia’s opposition to effective U.N. sanctions against Iran’s nuclear weapons program, ongoing assistance to Iran’s ballistic missile programs, exports of fuel to Iran’s Bushehr reactor, and its increasingly abrasive foreign policy all give us cause for concern about finalizing an agreement with Russia that would pave the way for the increased commercialization of Russia’s nuclear energy sector and could be construed as U.S. approval of its proliferation activities in Iran.

We understand that in spite of these disturbing activities by Russia, on July 3, 2007, a U.S.-Russian “Joint Declaration on Nuclear Energy and Nonproliferation: Joint Action” was announced. The statement accompanying this announcement indicated that you and President Putin “acknowledge with satisfaction the initialing of the bilateral Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the United States of America for cooperation in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy.” Further, we understand that you approved the final agreement this week pursuant to a formal signing ceremony in Moscow yesterday, and that you plan to submit the agreement to Congress shortly.

Mr. President, we firmly believe that the submission of a 123 agreement with Russia to Congress at this time could severely undermine our policy with respect to Iran at a critical juncture. Iran recently announced that it is testing advanced centrifuges,

which could significantly reduce the time it would take for Iran to produce highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon. We urge you not to send the agreement with Russia to Congress until Russia has ended support for Iran's ballistic missile program and stopped providing advanced conventional weapons and assistance to Iran's nuclear fuel cycle program, which advances their ability to develop nuclear weapons. Russia must also first demonstrate that it is prepared to cooperate with us to increase meaningful economic pressure on Iran to end its defiance of the UN Security Council's mandatory resolutions to suspend its enrichment of uranium.

Sincerely,

Noah Coleman

Eric Boehl

Jon Kyl

Ben Cardin

Tom Carper

Tim Wirth

Chris Coons

John Thune

Ken Salazar

Mike Johnson

Dir Vitter

Mike Braun

Roberto D. Sanchez

Jeff Flake

Pat Roberts

Tom Harkin

Maria Cantwell

Elizabeth Dole

Robert Bennett

Ron Wyden

Olympia Snowe

John E. Sununu

Lisa Murkowski

Jim DeMint

Jeff Sessions

Bill Marbury

Bob Casey, Jr.

Sayby Chaulkier

Susan M. Collins

Jon Liech

John Cornyn

to Benjamin Nelson