United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 15, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

As you know, section 1251 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010 requires that the submission of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) follow-on agreement to the Senate be accompanied by a plan to modernize the U.S. nuclear deterrent. The legislation was clear that such a plan should include its estimated budget requirements over a 10-year period, which is, we understand, the duration of the START follow-on agreement your administration is currently negotiating.

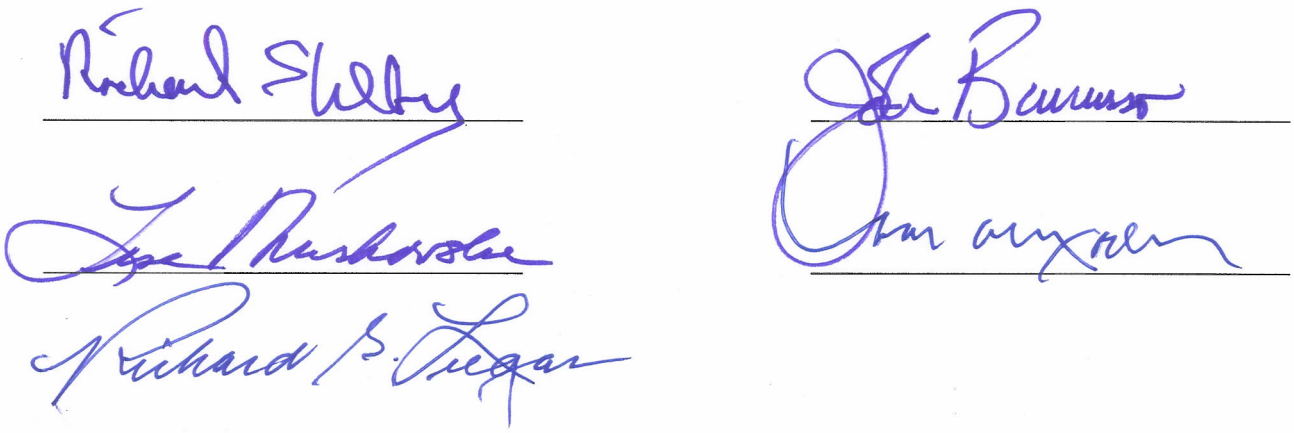
We agree with section 1251, which stated, "the enhanced safety, security, and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile, modernization of the nuclear weapons complex, and maintenance of the nuclear delivery systems are key to enabling further reductions in the nuclear forces for the United States." In fact, we don't believe further reductions can be in the national security interest of the U.S. in the absence of a significant program to modernize our nuclear deterrent.

This linkage between nuclear force reductions and modernization was also supported by the bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States (commonly called the Perry-Schlesinger Commission), which conducted a lengthy review of the state of our nuclear weapons stockpile and complex. The members of this commission were unanimously alarmed by the serious disrepair and neglect they found, and they made a series of recommendations to reverse this highly concerning situation. We endorse these recommendations and believe they constitute the minimum necessary to permit further nuclear force reductions; additionally, we believe the commission's final report provides a road map for the Nuclear Posture Review your Administration is currently conducting.

We agree with the commission that modernization should, at a minimum, include:

- Full and timely Lifetime Extension Programs for the B61 and W76 warheads consistent with military needs.
- Funding for a modern warhead that includes new approaches to life extension involving replacement, or, possibly, component reuse.

- Full funding for stockpile surveillance work through the nuclear weapons complex, as well as the science and engineering campaigns at the national laboratories.
- Full funding for the timely replacement of the Los Alamos plutonium research and development and analytical chemistry facility, the uranium facilities at the Oak Ridge Y-12 plant, and a modern pit facility.

We believe that funding for such a modernization program, consisting of at least all four of the interrelated components listed above, beginning in earnest in your FY11 budget, is needed as the U.S. considers the further nuclear weapons reductions proposed in the START follow-on negotiations. We are committed to the defense authorization act's requirement that the treaty and modernization plan be submitted at the same time, and we believe they must be acted on together as well. We also remain committed to section 1251's stipulations that the follow-on treaty must not limit U.S. missile defenses, space capabilities, or advanced conventional modernization, such as non-nuclear global strike capability.

Sincerely,