

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 20, 2013

The Honorable Allison M. Macfarlane
Chairman
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Chairman Macfarlane:

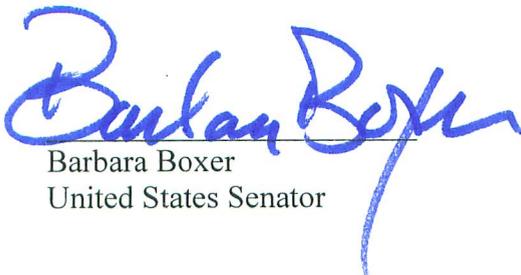
Next month marks two years since the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in Fukushima, Japan, and we are writing to urge the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to promptly take the next important steps needed to protect the 31 similarly designed U.S. nuclear reactors.

The NRC is legally responsible for ensuring when nuclear materials are used in the country, they are safe and secure. During the years since the disaster in Japan, the NRC staff has worked to conduct numerous studies evaluating the adequacy of U.S. nuclear safety standards, including containment venting systems. In November 2012 the NRC staff recommended the Commission require hardened vents that would operate in a severe accident and include filters to reduce the amount of radioactive material released into the environment. The NRC staff concluded this capability could help keep containment structures intact and documented that these technologies have been demonstrated in nuclear plants around the world. The NRC staff also found the safety benefit of this feature exceeds the cost, even while being restricted from considering the economic costs of an accident like in Japan that left communities uninhabitable.

Two and a half months have already passed since the NRC staff made this well-reasoned recommendation to the Commission and implementing these safety measures will likely take several years. The tens of millions of Americans who live near the affected reactors located in 15 states should not face additional delays.

We urge the Commission to promptly require installation of engineered filtered venting systems, consistent with the expert judgment of the NRC staff, the agency's goal of ensuring all safety features needed to address a Fukushima-type disaster are in place after five years, and the direction from Congress in the Fiscal Year 2012 Final Consolidated Appropriations Bill conference report. We will continue to provide oversight of agency activities dedicated to achieving that goal. If you have questions, please have your staff contact Grant Cope of Chairman Boxer's staff at 202-224-8832.

Sincerely,


Barbara Boxer
United States Senator


Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator


Richard Durbin
United States Senator


Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator


Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

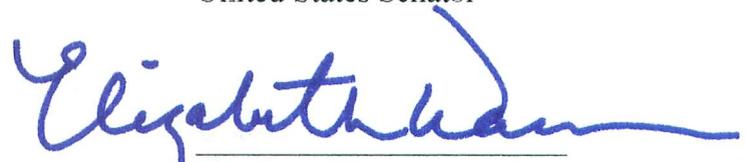

Robert Menendez
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator


Jeff Merkley
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Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
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