



# HEALTH PHYSICS SOCIETY

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*“Specialists in Radiation Safety”*

August 1, 2007

The Honorable Pete Domenici  
United States Senate  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**Kevin L. Nelson, PhD, CHP**

**President**

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Dear Senator Domenici:

On behalf of the Health Physics Society, thank you for your leadership in taking action to combat the looming human capital crisis in the nation's supply of radiation safety professionals by restoring funding in S.1751, the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill, 2008, for the Department of Energy's (DOE) Nuclear Energy Research and Development *University Reactor Fuel Assistance and Support* line.

**The Health Physics Society is now asking you to ensure that the conference committee report on Energy and Water Development Appropriations specifies that the funding for university academic programs in the nuclear sciences includes health physics programs and that it is for the conduct of scholarships, graduate fellowships, junior faculty support, and associate degree programs.**

Our concern is that the conference committee report needs to provide specific direction as to how the appropriations are to be used. Two separate agencies have the potential for being tasked to manage the nuclear science's university academic program support, that is, the DOE Office of Nuclear Energy as recommended by the Senate or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) as recommended by the House. **Whichever agency is eventually tasked with managing this program, they must have clear direction as to how the funding is to be spent.**

If the DOE Office of Nuclear Energy is tasked with managing the university support program we are concerned that without specific language they will not spend the money on deserving individual students or programs for scholarships, fellowships, junior faculty support, or associate degree program support but that they will funnel it into the new Nuclear Energy Research Initiative - Consortia (NEIR-C) program they have proposed. It is our experience that specific language to DOE is required to ensure that the

vehicles needed to sustain and grow the academic programs and to combat the human capital crisis in radiation safety professionals are actually funded. The vehicles needed by the university programs are student scholarships, graduate fellowships, and faculty support for four year, graduate, and associate degree programs available to any institution of higher learning with qualifying programs. As an example of the need for specific report language, the DOE did not recognize health physics as a qualifying nuclear science program for the Nuclear Engineering Scholarship and Fellowship Program. Then, finally, Senate Report 108-105, Energy and Water Development Appropriations for 2004, specifically tasked the DOE to request sufficient funds in future years to fund health physics programs.

We do not know how the NRC would administer this appropriation if they were tasked with managing the nuclear science's university support program. To our knowledge, the only existing legislation authorizing the NRC to support a university scholarship and fellowship program is Section 622 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Section 622). If the NRC does receive the appropriations and tasking, we have concerns, in the absence of other specific appropriations report language, that they may view this as an extension of the authorization in Section 622. Our concerns are due to the fact that (1) Section 622 carries a requirement that recipients of scholarship and graduate fellowship assistance must agree to employment with the NRC following completion of their program, (2) the NRC may not extend the university program support to needed vehicles such as infrastructure and faculty support or to associate degree programs and, (3) the NRC may extend the funding to fields of study beyond the nuclear sciences. Regarding concern (1) above, while the NRC clearly needs health physicists in the future, many other entities will also need health physicists, which the employment requirement does not support.

The Health Physics Society looks forward to your assistance in completing the task in which you have been a national leader, that is, funding an appropriate agency to manage a university support program for the nuclear sciences, including health physics, in order to combat the looming human capital crisis facing the nuclear energy industry and particularly the radiation safety profession.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin L. Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "N".

Kevin L. Nelson, PhD, CHP